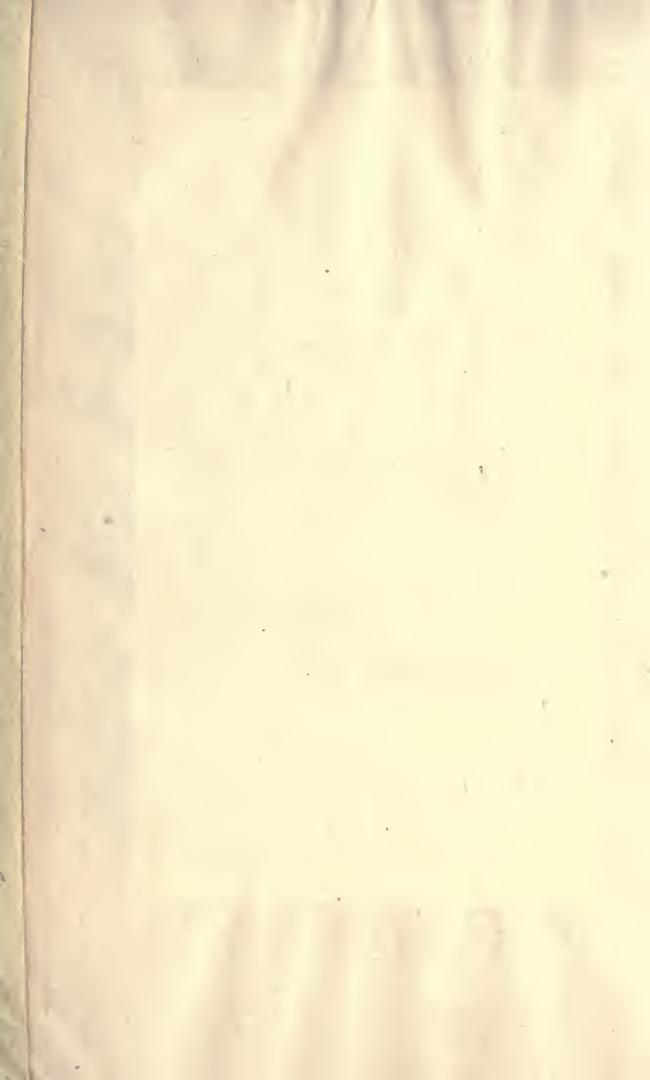






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HALF HOURS

WITH

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OLD HUMPHREY.

Half hours, when well and wisely spent,
Yield hours of joy and calm content,
Correct our daily hopes and fears,
And cheer and bless our future years.

LONDON:

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY;

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INTRODUCTION.

I HAVE entitled this book "HALF HOURS WITH OLD HUMPHREY," under the impression that its longest chapter will not occupy the reader more than half an hour in its perusal. I purpose to be cheerful and grave, descriptive and monitory, as the case may require ; but as I mean, also, to play the part of a kindly bowman, let me, reader, take thee for my target, and quarrel not thou with my unskilfulness if, aiming at thy head, I should occasionally lodge a friendly arrow in thy heart. Half an hour's exercise at a time is all that I require ; and if in that limited period thou shouldest become weary of being shot at, I will gladly become thy target, and thou shalt try thy hand in shooting at me.

HALF HOURS

WITH

OLD HUMPHREY.

ON TIME.

FOR a brief season let us talk together of Time. Few subjects are more important, though hardly any occupy less of our thoughts. We do, now and then, it is true, indulge in an ejaculation, "How time flies!" and sagely advise others to "take time by the forelock," but rarely do we make time the healthy and profitable subject of our meditation.

Were I to content myself with telling you that time is "the measure of duration," and that this measurement is made apparent to us by the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, by the changes

of the seasons, and by the returns of day and night ; as well as by human contrivances, such as hour-glasses, clocks, and watches, you would perhaps think, and with great propriety, that I might very safely have given you credit for knowing all this quite as well as myself ; but, as I do not mean to content myself with giving you this unnecessary information, I feel that I have some claim on your regard.

It is much better to improve time than to be able to define it ; and if I can impress your minds with the value of time, I may do something towards the attainment of this desirable object. Listen, then, to the words of Old Humphrey.

Time—silent, stealthy, and unstaying Time, with sinewy frame and capacious wings, watched his hour-glass. The elements were around him ; war was at work ; plague, pestilence, and famine pursued their course ; disease was slaying his thousands, and intemperance his ten thousands ; but Time regarded them not. He only regarded his hour-glass, and the sands ran on.

Time—rigid, pitiless, and implacable Time, as he moved on, held in his hand his scythe, which he seemed to have newly sharpened. The captive, who longed for liberty ; and the swain and maiden betrothed in marriage ; and the fundholder, who looked onwards to his

dividends, urged him to increase his speed; but he would not. Others there were whose plans were not matured, whose money was not ready for the day of payment, and whose lives were nearly spent, who begged hard of Time, yea, besought him with tears for some delay; but he deigned not to notice them; his keen grey eye rested on his hour-glass, and the sands ran on.

Time — aged, hard, and inaccessible Time, reclines on a sofa at the end of a ball-room, where Beauty leads the dance. Pleasure and joy live in her smile; the glance of her eye is felt from afar, and a thoughtless crowd flutter around to pay her homage. She is tastefully and splendidly arrayed; for riches are hers and power, and this is a season of revelry and delight. Alas! even now her cheek is pale; the diamonds in her eyes are dim. A mortal stroke, to which all are liable, has suddenly palsied her frame; she is hurrying to eternity. A moment she revives. Time, she is faintly shrieking thy name! she has a neglected Bible to read; neglected poor relations to relieve; and she has to prepare for her latter end. Hark! she is raving for thee. Time seems not to hear; for, as she is carried away, he leisurely adjusts his hour-glass, and the sands run on.

Time—selfish, severe, and immovable Time, sat at his ease in a chamber, while a miser grap-

pled with Death, whose summons to quit the world he declared himself willing to obey ; but not then. The conflict was desperate ; and almost had Death overpowered him, when the miser, as his last resource, turned to bribe Time to assist him. He offered him silver and gold : hundreds, nay thousands for another year—ay, for another hour. Fool that he was, to suppose that golden and silver dust would be taken in payment for the sands of life. Time gave no answer to his appeal, but occupied himself with his hour-glass, and the sands ran on.

Time—rigorous, ruthless, and resistless Time, lingered in the precincts of a palace. A mighty monarch was drawing near his latter end, and an important document affecting a kingdom's welfare was being drawn up for the royal signature ; dominion hung on a spider's thread. The order of peaceful succession, and the anarchy of a contested throne, were suspended in the balance. Among men, “ where the word of a king is, there is power.”

“ But wealth and power, and courts and kings,
With Time are very trifling things ;
No more they are, nor will they be,
Than bubbles on the boundless sea.”

The expiring monarch, the princes of his court, and his physicians, were urgent and importunate

with Time, for an hour was worth a diadem ; but Time was deaf to their entreaties ; he was busy with his hour-glass, and the sands ran on.

Time—austere, callous, and insensible Time, had seated himself at night on the stump of an old tree near a cottage. Alice was sober, honest, industrious, and cleanly ; but, oh ! it is fearful to be everything for this world, and nothing for another. Alice had found no time for prayer, no time to read her Bible ; and when she wanted it, it was not to be had. A fire broke out ; the flames caught Alice in her bed, and she was burned, dreadfully burned, before she was rescued. Then it was, when eternity appeared in view, that she entreated Time to let her read and pray ; but princes and peasants, courts and cottages, are alike with Time. Alice's entreaties were disregarded ; Time shifted his hour-glass, and the sands ran on.

Time—hoary-headed, obdurate, and relentless Time, walked on the billowy beach. A vessel was about to sail to a distant land, having on board a broken-hearted father, whose abandoned son had forced him by his profligacy from the land of his birth. That son, repentant and reformed, was flying to throw himself at his father's feet, that he might bathe them with penitent tears. In another hour he would have arrived, and sorrow

would have been turned into joy. Did Time grant him the space he required? Only one little hour! Not he. The son came, but the father was gone for ever. Time heeded them not; he heeded his hour-glass only, and the sands ran on.

Time—remorseless, inflexible, and flinty-hearted Time, stood on a scaffold. The rope was around a culprit's neck, but as yet the cap was not pulled over his face. The wretched man strained his eyes toward the distant road, for he expected a reprieve. As he gazed with agony, the clammy sweat hung about his brow, for in his excited imagination he saw at a distance a horseman urging on his flying steed, waving a handkerchief—the symbol of pardon—and flying as a saving angel to his rescue. He turned to Time, with all the fearful energy of one grappling for life. He begged, he prayed, he raved for a few minutes' delay—in vain! The cap was pulled over his distorted face; Time only looked on his hour-glass, and the sands ran on.

Time—stern, unsparing, and inexorable Time, leaned against a bed-post in a sick chamber. A backsliding reprobate had sinned away his season of grace; his mortal hour was come. The pangs of remorse were tearing him; the horrors of despair were gathering around him. He cried aloud that a space might be allowed him for repentance;

a year, a month, a day, an hour, nay, only a quiet minute to put up one prayer—one cry for mercy—one breath to ——. Sin chuckled at the frightful scene, and Death smiled in derision, as Time, iron-hearted Time, turned his hour-glass, and the sands ran on.

And will Time tarry for neither youth, beauty, nor riches? Will he neither stand still for princes and peasants, nor allow a moment's respite to the dying reprobate? How, then, reader, canst thou expect him to deal more tenderly with thee? Trust him not, but improve thy flying moments with all thy power, so shalt thou survive the tyranny of Time. Turn thee from Time to the Eternal; for with the Lord "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," 2 Pet. iii. 8. Seek the mercy of Christ, like the dying thief on the cross; for the only opportunity may be the present. Adore his name, implore his grace, believe his gospel, obey his word, give him thy heart, and then—

Though Time, exhausted Time, shall die—

An old, forgotten story;

Yet shalt thou live and reign on high,

In everlasting glory.

TAGGARD'S TUMP.

IF, reader, you are a lover of sylvan scenes, give me your company for half an hour. Next to the enjoyment of gazing on the goodly objects of God's glorious creation is, perhaps, the delight of musing upon them pleurably and profitably; this added delight, springing as it does from a principle of admiration and thankfulness, gives freshness to the verdure of earth, and brightness to the beams of heaven. He who, looking on green trees and kindling skies, can truly say, "My Father made them all," has that within him which is worth more than the gold of California.

On the skirt of a village of some note, and at bowshot distance from the toll-gate road, stands a romantic mound of earth, called Taggard's Tump. From time immemorial it has borne this name, and many wild traditions are current among the older inhabitants of the village concerning its origin; but as these are very vague and very improbable, it is hardly worth while to dwell upon them.

At the present day, Taggard's Tump, which is

a knoll, or round hill of small dimensions, is partly covered with a group of ancient elms forming a circle, whose diameter may be some eight or ten yards. The spreading branches of these trees, canopying the green sod in the circle beneath, render the place attractive; and many a stranger, before he passes on, pauses there, and turns aside for a moment to meditate in the grateful shade. It is, indeed, an imposing spot, and a lover of nature will not stand unmoved in that natural temple, whose living columns, shooting far upwards, terminate in a roof of verdant foliage fluttering in the breeze, every interstice admitting the grateful brightness of the azure heavens.

The elm is, and always has been, my favourite tree; nor have the gigantic stems, the goodly branches, the beauteous bark, or the flaky foliage of other forest trees, won away from it aught of my fondness and regard. I find in it—taking it altogether—more grandeur, picturesque beauty, and variety, than in any other British tree. No wonder that, with so strong a predilection for the elm, I should frequently, in my rambles, have sought the friendly shelter of Taggard's Tump, both from dazzling sunshine and the passing shower. I have stood alone, surrounded by those bulky stems and aspiring branches, when the morning dews spangled the grass with pearls, and

when the shades of evening were gathering around. When the midday sun was blazing in the south ; and when the midnight hour prevailed, and all around was obscurity, stillness, and solemnity.

The clustering elms on Taggard's Tump are the first to catch the beams of the rejoicing sun, and the last to lose his retiring rays ; among their branches, the feathered songsters warble their morning jubilee and evening thanksgiving ! The busy world goes by unheeded : the beggar with his wallet, the peer with his goodly equipage ; Beauty in her gay apparel, and Want in rags ; Joy, with his smiling face, and Sorrow with her brow of care ; as well as the passing pageants of the gay bridal party, and the solemn funeral procession.

There is that in natural and rural scenery which always excites me ; and whether it be the stately tree, or the bladed grass and tufted moss beneath my feet, that attracts my attention ; in either case my heart opens to pleasurable emotions. Had I no more gratifying object to call forth my admiration and joy, I could ponder with pleasure on a bed of stinging nettles, and rejoice over a toadstool.

Having just returned from a summer ramble, I have left the high road, and sought the imposing shade of the goodly elms on Taggard's Tump,

waving, as they do, their redundant foliage in the breeze. All is still, but the whispering of the goodly grove above and around me. Not a foot-fall, nor a distant sound breaks upon my ear. As I gaze upward at the leafy canopy, that bold and striking metaphor of holy writ comes to my remembrance, "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands," Isa. lv. 12.

Many, in such a place and season as this, would be a little fanciful; and, to own a truth, I feel that I am becoming so; my mind is presenting to me figures such as may have stood where I am standing, and painting scenes which may have occurred, by day or by night, beneath and around these trees. While I am in the mood, I will note down such of these imaginary scenes as have an air of probability.

It is the afternoon of a summer's day, and three or four Sunday-school girls are sitting beneath the grateful shades of the overbranching elms, learning their lessons. They have had a scamper around the Tump, and one has occasioned another to fall. A hasty word of reproach from the fallen, and a declaration from the offender that she did not intend to throw her school-fellow down, have passed; the dusty frock has been

shaken ; a reconciling grasp of the hand has been given ; and, with good-humour in their faces, and peace in their hearts, they are conning over the Scripture texts required on the coming Lord's day. How many precious texts of Scripture are stored up in the memory of Sunday scholars, of which many of the worldly-wise know nothing. "I thank thee, O Father," said the Redeemer, "Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father : for so it seemed good in thy sight," Matt. xi. 25, 26.

It is spring, and a piefinch has built her nest in one of the branches of an elm, ten or a dozen feet from the ground. There she has sat on her speckled eggs, and there she has hatched her little ones. Who can tell the fondness of the feathered race for their young ! Alas ! the nest is robbed, and the poor unfledged helpless ones, after being pushed along the ground, by the foot of their oppressor, to make them tumble over, are being inhumanly pelted with stones from a distance, to the great anguish of the parent bird. It is Robert Andrews that does this cruel deed ; but little does he get for his pains, for a companion, in throwing at the birds, has struck him in the face with the stone, and quenched the sight

of one of his eyes for ever. Months have passed : there is a dog-fight beneath the trees, and one of the dogs is just worried to death ; the fight was got up by Robert Andrews, whose thumb has been bitten half off in the scuffle. Years have rolled away : a battle is being fought in the green circle by two young men ; one of them, a brawling and blaspheming reprobate, has his collar-bone broken. It is Robert Andrews. Again it is summer, and a ruffian-like fellow is being taken by in handcuffs ; he has committed a burglary ; the burglar is Robert Andrews. It is autumn, and an inhabitant of the place is reading the newspaper to a friend ; and among the names of the felons who have been transported for life is that of Robert Andrews : " There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked," Isa. xlviii. 22.

The yellow leaves of October are hanging on the trees, and the night is fine and clear. The church clock has struck ten, and the moon is shining in the blue sky. A young man, with a bundle in his hand, has arrived in breathless haste, as though he were fearful of having trespassed on an appointed time. It seems to be some relief to find himself alone ; but he now begins to pace backwards and forwards as one impatient of delay. Fretful ejaculations escape him, as at every two or three turns he pauses a moment to listen. A

light footstep is heard, and a youthful female glides hastily to the spot.

The young man is angry, and reproaches her; the whole world, he says, is against him. He has quarrelled with his parents, and in wrath and bitterness has quitted the dwelling of his childhood, determined never again to return. He has contrived to let Alice know that if ever she wishes to see him again it must be at nine that night, beneath the overshadowing boughs of the elm trees of Taggard's Tump. Alice has stolen away from her father's house with some difficulty, and many qualms of conscience, running all risks to keep the appointment; and there they are together.

Excited, unreasonable, and implacable, he rails against his father, and entreats Alice to accompany him in his wanderings through the world. Again he paces to and fro, smiting his forehead with his clenched fist, urging his distressed companion to share his mad-headed career. But oh! how sweetly does she reply? for a time she opposes not the wildfire of his anger, but by degrees she wins upon him with her gentleness. She mildly sets before him his madness and his folly, conjures him to bear with his parents as they have borne with him, and asks him how he can hope his heavenly Father to forgive him if he cannot

forgive his earthly parent. With such meekness, fidelity, and affection does she address him, that, like a chastened child, he resolves to return to the habitation of his father. "Wait upon the Lord," says Alice to him, as they walk from the spot together; for, "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

Seven years have passed: it is a summer's evening, and two rosy-faced children are playing on the grass, while their happy parents sit together on the seat beneath the trees. "Alice," says the father, "do you remember that night?" "Indeed I do," she replied, looking upwards with a thankful tear in either eye. Her grateful husband takes her by the hand, affectionately repeating the text, "They that wait upon the Lord, shall," indeed, "renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint," Isa. xl. 31.

The wind is high, and the night terribly dark, and two men with hurried feet turn aside from the road; one stands leaning against a tree, while the other seats himself on the ground, and draws up the slides of a dark lantern to examine the flint of his pistol. Seen by the light of the lantern, one, dressed as a sailor, with a black beard, has a ferocious aspect. The other wears the faded jacket of a soldier, and both are armed with

deadly bludgeons. Their faces are flushed, and their hearts are inflamed with drink.

The clatter of a horse's iron hoofs is heard between the fitful blasts of the wind. The slide of the lantern in an instant is shut down, the sailor starts to his feet, and hurries forward to the road with his companion. The report of a pistol follows, a horse gallops by, riderless, and soon after the two men return to the shade of the trees. They have wounded the horseman, and robbed him of a few coins; but a quarrel takes place in the division of their spoil, and they grapple hard together, grasping each other by the throat. The lantern is crushed beneath their feet, the coins are lost, and the blaspheming ruffians, empty-handed, announcing bitter imprecations against each other, take different paths. Truly, "the way of transgressors is hard," Prov. xiii. 15.

A group of little children are playing at such childish games as accord with their inclination; at Taggard's Tump. It is proposed by one to pluck some flowers from a neighbouring garden, which can easily be reached through the palisades; and all save one of them agree to the proposal. He tells them, "It is a sin to steal a pin," and that it will be wicked to steal a flower. As the child grows, he often comes here with his book, and whenever his playmates do wrong he reproves them with all

the simplicity of childhood. "It will be wicked," "God will be angry," and such-like expressions which escape him, show plainly that he has a tender conscience, and that he is being brought up in the fear of the Lord. Years have rolled away. He came here when he was quite a child; he came here when he was a young man; and he frequents the place now in his gray hairs. No longer ago than yesterday he was here, reading in peace and with manifest pleasure a chapter in his pocket Bible. One of the verses he read was this, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it," Prov. xxii. 6; and another was, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments," Psa. cxi. 10.

Come, I have given free liberty to my fancy; let me draw one more scene; let me relate one more history, and I have done. The widow Allen once lived in a cottage near, which has long since been removed from the place. The poor widow was what mankind called deformed; but He who made all things, knows best what form to give them. Men think this outer tree deformed; but the birds never thought so, for they have built their nests in it, and sung in it their morning and evening songs. The sun never

thought so, for he has shone upon it as favourably as upon others ; and spring never thought so, for she has ever given it a leaf as green as those of its companions.

The crooked and poverty-stricken widow had a son ; but the poor lad, frightened by his playmates at school, at the age of nine years became an idiot. This was a heavy affliction, though not without some alleviation, for her son grew up affectionate, tractable, inoffensive, and happy. To roam about with younger children, and to do as they bade him do, was his delight ; but if ever he was scared he ran off directly to his mother. It was a strange sight to see a human being run to so weak a thing for protection ; but weak as she was, to him she was a tower of strength.

The poor widow was pious, and though her son showed it not as others do, yet what he had been taught in his earlier days of holy things, clung to his heart in his idiocy. When his mother knelt in prayer, he knelt beside her ; when she went to the house of God, he went also, and was as her shadow. Her Bible, though he never read it, was to him as a holy thing. Twenty times a day, at least, did he repeat the words, "Above the stars."

Often did the poor widow come here with her son ; but once she came in great distress, for the

few articles of furniture she had were about to be taken from her for rent. "Where is the friend that will help us?" said she, for a moment giving way to her grief. Her son directly gave utterance to his accustomed expression, "Above the stars!" The widow wept, but her tears were not tears of grief. Her wavering faith had been revived by the words of her son. She returned home, relief was at hand, she was not forgotten by Him who watches over the widow and the fatherless; as she walked away her words were, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour."

Let such as have children weak in their intellect receive patiently the mysterious visitation, looking upwards. Such children are usually made happy by trifles, which otherwise would yield them little pleasure. They are strangers to many solitudes, and in their weakness they are under the care of One who is mighty. If the widow's son afflicted his mother by his helplessness, he comforted her by his affection.

The widow died—as all must die—and her weak-minded, inoffensive son came to this place alone, looking about as though he would find her. "Where is your mother?" asked one of his playmates." His eye glanced upwards for a moment, and then burst forth from his lips his wonted words, "Above the stars!"

The sun is now getting westerly, and I must bid farewell to Taggard's Tump. Haply many a musing wanderer, tempted by the pure breath of heaven to walk abroad, here drinks in the glories of creation, and ponders the gracious promises of the gospel, till he feels, as I have done, his heart to be filled with thankfulness, and his spirit to be lifted up—"above the stars!"

INQUIRY TO A CHRISTIAN SOLDIER.

THOUGH about to talk to you, reader, as if you were a soldier, yet do I not suppose that you either array yourself in red apparel, or wear a sword dangling from your side. My business now is with you, and not with the army. Give me your best attention.

Christian soldier, bearing the banner of the cross, you have enlisted yourself on the Lord's side ;—a word with you, then. How do you carry your colours? Are you inclined to consider the days of persecution at an end? If you only display your colours on field-days, you had better pass no opinion on the subject, for you are no judge at all of the matter.

No wonder that a soldier should pass unmolested through the camp of the enemy when he has disguised his uniform and concealed his colours.

Christian," in "Pilgrim's Progress," found a smooth path under his feet when he got over the stile, and turned out of the straight road; and so may you, fellow soldier, by a little manœuvring

and hiding of your colours. Keep a laugh for the gay, and a long face for the grave; wear your clothes of a fashionable cut; "eat, drink, and be merry," and the world will let you go on pretty quietly; but I can promise you a crimson blush on your cheek when you come to kneel before God in secret.

I knew a valiant soldier of Christ who shouldered his colours so manfully, that he could not enter a house at any hour, or on any business, without being known as a Christian soldier. He had, it is true, the hatred of the world for his pains; but he had, also, great peace, and the testimony of a good conscience. But I will tell you of a few stout standard-bearers, men who thought it a small thing to die in a good cause, and whose hands would still have clutched their colours as with hooks of steel, even had those hands been wounded and bleeding.

Daniel refused to conceal his colours; he threw open his window, and continued to pray to God in the face of those who were able to kill the body, but were not able to kill the soul; he would not hide his colours, so he was thrown into the den of lions.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to conceal their colours; they would not bow down to the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar had set

up, but worshipped boldly the living God ; so they were cast into the burning fiery furnace.

John the Baptist refused to conceal his colours ; he was found true to his Captain's cause before king Herod, so he was beheaded in the prison.

Paul refused to conceal his colours ; he stood up boldly before kings and rulers, so he was called mad, put in bonds, smitten, and stoned.

Look about you, Christian soldier : if the world, that crucified the Captain of your salvation, is receiving you as its friend and companion, let this question be a home thrust to you—how do you carry your colours ?

Do you talk like the world ? If so, you conceal your colours. No wonder that the days of persecution are at an end with you, and that your company is sought after. Oh, degrade not yourself as a soldier, deny not your Commander ; take heed to your ways, that you sin not with your tongue. Hoist up your colours, and let your watchword be known : “ Our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven ; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ,” Phil. iii. 20.

Do you dress like the world ? Do you wear the same trinkets that the world wears ? No wonder your enemies should not detect you ; you have concealed your colours. We say, when we see him at a street's length, “ Yonder goes a soldier, by

his scarlet jacket!" Oh, let it be said of you, "There goes a Christian." "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," Rom. xiii. 14.

Do you walk like the world? What! as careful and as anxious in the affairs of this life as those around you, yet professing to be a stranger and pilgrim upon earth? "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." Unfold your colours, and let the record on your actions be legible: "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come," Heb. xiii. 14.

I dare not tell you, nay, I could not tell you, how often I have been tempted to hide my colours, and how often I have been covered with shame on account of my cowardice. When I go forth into the world, and stand my ground, even though I do get wounded in my Master's cause, it makes it the sweeter to draw nigh unto God; but when I conceal my colours, I feel ashamed of myself, and am more than half afraid to enter into my closet. Fellow-soldier! take a word of admonition from one who has suffered many a cheek-burn, and heart-burn too, through a dastardly spirit; and mind how you carry your colours.

Remember when Peter concealed his colours, and forgot, and even denied the Captain of salvation, one look from his suffering Lord melted

his heart, and "he went out, and wept bitterly." Ever remember that "the carnal mind is enmity against God." As in the old time, "he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit," so it is now. If you have no scar about you, if you have never yet been wounded in the cause of your King and your country, look well to yourself, lest you be charged one day with concealing your colours; or, indeed, lest you be found one day without colours to conceal.

IN SEARCH OF THE BEAUTIFUL.

You will hardly object to accompany me for half an hour in search of that which, in every part of animate and inanimate nature, affords us all so much delight. So long as the eye has power to view the works of God, and the heart to beat with satisfaction, so long will they both be pleasantly excited by the beautiful in creation :

“How passing sweet, and free, and fair,
The scenes of earth arise!
How goodly, bright, and beautiful,
The glowing summer skies!”

“I will go,” thought I, “in search of the beautiful ; but where shall I be likely to find it? The wide-spread world is before me ; the wonders of the east and west, the north and south, are great. To what part shall I direct my attention? Where is it likely that the beautiful will be found?”

When a man resolves to travel, without making up his mind where he shall go, he has

usually a long journey before him, especially if, as in my case, he means to dispense with steamers, horses, carriages, and railroad conveyances, and travel only in imagination. "I will go," thought I, "in search of the beautiful;" and splendid visions immediately presented themselves to my view. The mountains of Switzerland, the clear sunny skies of Italy and Spain, the temples of Greece and Rome, the icebergs of the pole, and the immeasurable forests of the New World, were only a part of the gorgeous panorama that my fancy spread around. "In some of these," thought I, "I shall find the beautiful."

Much as we say or sing about there being "no place like home," whenever we sigh for health, wealth, knowledge, or pleasure, we are almost always inclined to look for it abroad; it is, therefore, not a little creditable to me that, on this particular occasion, before I in earnest packed up my imaginary trunk and mental portmanteau, to go abroad, I began to look about me in my search at home. "Here," thought I, "is a splendid city, well-stored museums of all kinds, zoological gardens, and rural scenery, all within my reach, to assist me in my inquiry: let me look about me in my search after the beautiful."

I looked at the skies when the king of day

came, "rejoicing in his strength," lighting up the heavens and the earth with glory; when the mid-day clouds curtained the blue vault above; when the setting sun flung around him a flood of molten diamonds and gold; and when the moon in her tranquil majesty passed through the blue arch of heaven. My eye and my heart were alike open to their beauty. In the transport of my delight I clasped my hands together with energy. These things are, indeed, beautiful: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork," Psa. xix. 1.

I saw beauty in the mighty oak, in the stately cedar, in the towering elm and the pine, in the solemn cypress and the yew, in the graceful poplar, in the silvery bark of the birch, in the upright blossom of the chestnut, and in the pendent branches of the laburnum and the weeping willow. There was beauty in the green leaf of spring, and the sere leaf of autumn, in the hill and the valley, the mountain and the moor, the tangled copse and the running brook, the waving corn-fields, and the young lambs racing in the sunny mead. Gaze where I would, something beautiful met my sight. When, humble, and prayerful, and grateful, we walk abroad, we see and feel the beauty of creation. Then it is that "the mountains and the hills" appear to "break

forth into singing, and all the trees of the field" to "clap their hands," Isa. lv. 12.

How attractive were the fruits of the earth ! I regarded them with unwonted pleasure. The red shining apple, the mellow pear, the downy apricot and peach, the grateful gooseberry, the juicy currant, and the blooming plum, vied with one another in beauty. These fruits are so common that we are not struck with their attractions; but each is a picture on which we may pause with delight. But when, with admiring eyes, I regarded with fixed attention the ripe cherry, the luscious grape and strawberry, the mottled melon, the yellow orange, and the golden pine, I felt thankful to the Father of mercies for the beauty with which he had decorated his bounteous gifts. No wonder that Solomon should make him gardens and orchards, and plant trees in them of all kinds of fruits ! How rich, how free, how abundant is the goodness of God !

And was there no beauty in the foliage of the trees ? Let the crumpled leaf of the oak, the soft leaf of the lime, the glossy leaf of the holly and ivy, the broad leaf of the sycamore, the scalloped leaf of the chestnut, and the green and variegated leaves of the laurel give the reply. Never had I so closely inspected them in their form, colour, veining, and variety. They moved

me much while I regarded them, and the ejaculation "Wonderful!" broke from my lips. Precious are the words of holy writ that speak of the man who delights himself in the law of the Lord: "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper," Psa. i. 3.

What a world of beauty seemed suddenly opened before me when I turned to gaze upon flowers! We know that these grow from the ground; but I have often fancifully thought that they were flung by angel hands from heaven! What a profusion of cowslips and buttercups and daisies and daffodils meet the eye in the fields! What glowing poppies and elegant foxgloves! And, then, in the garden,

"The sweet, the light, the lovely rose,
The fairest flower on earth that grows."

The gaudy tulip, the stately hollyhock and lily, the sweet-scented pea, with hyacinths, convolvuluses, forget-me-nots, geraniums, anemones, japonicas, pansies, passion flowers, and a hundred others. Why, had we never seen these things before, they would overwhelm us with delight. If we look at ten thousand flowers, we shall find them all beautiful:

“ Long as there’s a sun that sets,
Primroses will have their glory;
Long as there are violets,
They will have a place in story.”

Nor did I overlook the grass of the field. The common meadow grass, Timothy, canary, and cocksfoot grass, the quaking grass, the slender spiked panic grass, and the feather grass, are all wondrously formed. I examined them with care, and greatly marvelled at the delicacy of their structure. There were others, also, that attracted me, and the corn-plants, wheat, barley, oats, and rye gave me more joy than they had ever given me before. I not only saw, but felt their beauty. Have you ever looked on these things, as on the workmanship of the Almighty’s wonder-working hands? Have you regarded them as gifts from above, for your express gratification? They are full of beauty.

Of all earthly hues, perhaps the hues of the precious stones are the most brilliant. On these I fixed my eyes with an intensity of wonder. If beauty can be found in colour and brightness, then are precious stones beautiful. The dazzling diamond and the crystal, the red ruby and garnet, the blue sapphire and turquoise, the green emerald and jasper, the violet amethyst, and the yellow topaz, to pass by the onyx, the opal, the cornelian, the agate, and the coral, are surpassingly

arresting. I cannot tell you my emotions while my eyes drank in greedily the splendid and glowing hues that glittered before me.

I glanced rapidly at the shells of the mighty ocean, and could hardly forgive myself in not having before regarded them with greater attention. Univalves, bivalves, and multivalves were all goodly to gaze on, some having beauty of form, and others beauty of colour. The nautilus, the cone, and the cowry, the bubble, the wreath, and the trumpet, the limpet, the tusk, the hoof, and the turban shell, had each enough of interest to call forth my astonishment. Again and again I handled the sheath-shells, the gaper, the wedge, the Venus, the ark, the thorny oyster, the sea-wing, the stone-piercer, and the coat of mail ; it seemed as though my eyes had never before been opened clearly to discern the beauty of shells. And these curious formations are so plentiful that we tread them under our feet. Wonderful ! wonderful ! Truly, "the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hands are the deep places of the earth ; the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it : and his hands formed the dry land. Oh come, let us worship and bow down : let us kneel before the Lord our Maker," *Psa. xcv. 3—6.*

I next looked at animated nature; and if the

half-reasoning elephant, the huge rhinoceros, the shaggy bear, the patient camel, the wild buffalo, and the grinning baboon were not alluring to the eye, yet there were not wanting things that attracted me. The figure of the horse with his neck clothed with thunder, the symmetry of the antelope with his limbs of grace, the tawny covering of the lion, the striped skins of the tiger and the zebra, the spotted hides of the leopard and giraffe, and the fur of the ermine, bewildered me with their beauty. I gazed again and again—and again and again my astonishment was called forth. If you have never seen these things with an eye of delight, you have never yet regarded them with attention, for God has moulded them in forms and painted them with colours peculiarly their own.

I gazed on the plumage of birds, and my wonder was called forth till I became dumb with admiration, laying my hand upon my mouth. The dunghill cock strutted before me in his feathery grandeur, the graceful swan presented her snowy bosom, the canary warbled in his yellow doublet, the kingfisher skimmed along the brook in his brilliant attire, and the proud peacock spread his tail of glittering glory. What varied attitudes! what glowing colours! And then the dazzling hues of the humming-bird, the radiant feathers of

the flamingo, the glittering apparel of the gold and the silver pheasant, and the entrancing lightness and elegance of the bird of paradise! Oh! they were beyond all praise, and beauty seemed not to beam only, but to blaze amid the radiance around.

And did the finny inhabitants of the waters fail to wake my wonder? Did I gaze on the sparkling salmon, the yellow carp, the gold fish and the silver fish, without emotion? On the contrary, their glittering, glowing, ever-changing hues made my eyes sparkle with amazement. Yet even these, if possible, were exceeded by the radiant hues of the serpent tribe. In every possible form and colour, beauty appeared to be presented to my eyes. My heart was eloquent, but my lips were dumb.

I looked at the insect world, and a new beauty rose up before me. The industrious bee was abroad, the warrior wasp in his shining yellow coat of mail, and butterflies were fluttering in the air. The latter were like flying flowers of every conceivable attraction. Ruby reds, brilliant blues, dazzling yellows, and glittering greens, were mingled with every other colour. The dragon-fly flitted to and fro over the stream in his burnished armour, and the diamond beetle crept beneath the grass, spangled with radiant hues of almost unequalled

intensity. The same heavenly hand that painted the rainbow had given them their brighter colours, and sent them forth as glowing specimens of his almighty workmanship.

I turned my eyes upon mankind ; on the smiling babe, and the gray hair and the wrinkled brow. What a thrill ran through my heart as I gazed on the lovely infant with dimpled cheek--

Secure in slumber, fearless of alarms,
Cradled in peace, and clasp'd in beauty's arms.

Youth and maturity attracted me. The graceful figure of man, the fairer and lovelier form of woman, were a beauteous pair,

For contemplation he, and valour form'd—
For softness she, and sweet attractive grace.

Was there no beauty here ? My heart felt there was ; and when I saw age with meekness and forbearance on his brow, wisdom on his lip, and heaven in his desires, his hopes, and his expectations, there was a beauty in the scene that sank into my soul. “Enough ! enough !” said I. “Good and great is the Lord ! ‘He hath made everything beautiful in his time,’ ” Eccles. iii. 11.

I have looked at the heavens and the earth ; I have gazed on trees, fruit, leaves, flowers, and grasses ; on precious stones, shells, animals, fish, reptiles, and insects, and lastly on mankind, and

there is beauty in them all. No longer will I wander in search of the beautiful, for when our eyes and hearts are open, the beautiful is everywhere to be found. Oh that we may love the beauty of creation and revelation! and oh that we may seek to obtain the beauty of truth, the beauty of love, the beauty of peace, the beauty of virtue, "the beauty of holiness," and the beauty of heaven!

ON HIGH-COLOURED ADVERTISEMENTS.

As children are attracted by gaudy colours, so are grown-up people affected by vivid descriptions. What the red, the blue, the green, and the yellow are to the boy, the inflated phrase and high-wrought description often are to the man. With many people the more highly a thing is praised, the stronger is its attraction, and it is on this assumption that so many high-coloured advertisements appear.

Whoever would know what is passing in the world should read the newspapers; for he will find in them much to inform his understanding, to assist his judgment, and to move him to mirth, applause, pity, and indignation. Having recently turned over a file or two of journals, I am disposed, in a somewhat humorous mood, to make some allusion to a portion of their contents.

We read in holy writ of a disposition on the part of a purchaser to cry down the article he is about to buy: "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he

boasteth," Prov. xx. 14. Hardly do I think that, in this respect, any alteration for the better has taken place since the days of Solomon; but, however this may be, mankind have certainly not declined in the art of crying up the articles they wish to sell. From a mansion, or an estate, to a pill-box and packet of needles, everything, according to the advertisements in the newspapers, may be had of the very highest quality, and at the very lowest price.

Again : if we look at the amazing establishments of some of those who cater for the wants of the people, and so freely advertise in the public journals, it may incline us to think that there is no little truth in the adage—

He that in the world would rise,
Must read the news and advertise.

Admitting, for a moment, that all which I have been reading is correct, and that there are, really, such excellent bargains to be made as are publicly set forth, I have, for a long time, been standing sadly in my own light. Let me look at the affair a little more narrowly, for he is not a wise man who throws away his money by bad management, when he has so many opportunities of laying it out to advantage.

I have no positive intention of quitting the house now occupied by me, and if I had, the pur-

chase of an estate is not exactly the thing that would suit me, and yet there is something very attractive in the announcement, "That snug little freehold, 'Rose Cottage,' with an excellent orchard and eight acres of land, free from all encumbrance, delightfully situated in a healthy and pleasant neighbourhood, commanding an extended prospect, is now to be sold, with immediate possession, on very moderate terms; any part of the purchase-money may remain on mortgage." There is such a kindly spirit of accommodation in all this, such an evident disposition to meet every wish, to anticipate every objection, and remove every impediment, that, to say the least of it, one can hardly regard the advertiser as anything less than a friend.

Then, again, there are so many "eligible investments" of all kinds, in houses and land; so many "lucrative partnerships in established concerns," and so many shares to be had in assurance, railroad, mining, and other companies, all professing to enrich those who secure them, that the wonder is, how owners of such property can manifest such careless indifference to their own interest, as to part with such undeniable advantages.

In the article of clothing, the liberality of those who undertake to meet our wants, almost amounts to benevolence. What a supply, a profusion,

a prodigality of coats—pea, pilot, and polka ; fur, Russian, and Chesterfield ; Athol, Pembroke, and American ; Bedford, Taglioni, Codrington, and Albert ; a man must, indeed, be difficult to please, who can find nothing among these to suit him. In waistcoats—though I believe vests is the modern word—there is the same unsparing plenteousness. Plaids, Thibets, Mexicans, cassimeres, Persian, satin and velvet, plain and figured, are all provided at prices to suit all pockets ; with trousers, cloaks, blouses, liveries, and ladies' riding habits, in unstinted abundance : the money paid by a purchaser for any of these articles to be on the instant returned, where the slightest dissatisfaction prevails. Talk of tradesmen being covetous, and given to take advantage !—Why, what can be more honourable and open-hearted than these professions ?

I have now before me an advertisement of an “immense stock” of “substantially-made,” and “fashionably-cut” clothes, according to which it seems beyond dispute very practicable for a man to make his appearance in a “splendid” frock coat, a “gentlemanly” waistcoat, and “a pair of fine black cloth trousers,” for the sum of one pound eleven shillings and ninepence. I have been looking at the cuffs of my best coat for some time, and really, really, it hardly seems reasonable

to wear clothes at all questionable, when such an unquestionable suit can be obtained on such easy terms. Be not surprised, should a fit of extravagance come over me, and you should meet me one of these days, "spick and span."

I see but little about butcher's meat in the papers, but of York and Westphalian hams, real Wiltshire bacon, and excellent Welsh butter, there seems no difficulty in laying in a stock on most economical terms; while cod-fish may at times be bought at twopence per pound, and soles at the same price per pair. Mackerel, too, whose rainbow tints bespeak their freshness, are said to be unusually low. Peace and plenty are excellent things; we have been blessed with the former now for a long season, and no one, judging from advertisements in the newspapers, can reasonably doubt the existence of the latter.

There are many who drink neither Scotch, Burton, Alton, nor Bass's pale ale, nor Barclay's porter, nor Guinness's XXX Dublin stout, and to these especially the article of tea is one of considerable importance. Were we to form an opinion from the advertisements of the many "depôts," "marts," and "establishments" in the tea-trade, and the peculiar and especial advantages that each enjoys, one might be led to suspect that they employ their own ships and carry on a direct trade

with the Hong merchants of the celestial empire. In pekoe, souchong, congou, and bohea, twankay, hyson, and gunpowder teas, all our wants are anticipated with the greatest care, and almost affectionate philanthropy. We can, all of us, if we like, drink, on very moderate terms, just such tea as is supplied to the royal table. Is not this enough to tempt us to take an extra cup, if not two? There is, it appears, an admirable mixture, made up of forty different rare black teas, every kind grown on a different plantation, and possessing some peculiar quality, or flavour. These various kinds are blended together in such proper proportions, that they produce a compound absolutely perfect. What more can we wish for? Unfortunately, however, as everything has a shadowy side, this excellent mixture is only known to one tea-dealer, though five hundred others undertake to supply it, every one vending his own mixture. It follows, then, that of the five hundred medleys, or mixtures, only one is genuine; the remaining four hundred and ninety-nine being spurious. This is a somewhat knotty point, which I must leave to the tea-dealers to settle. When I order my next chest—no, not chest, for that is a little above my mark—when I next order tea, I must see if I cannot get it of the genuine mixture.

When I was a boy, I never dreamed of putting Macassar oil, the toilet gem, bear's grease, and Circassian cream, on my head, nor had I my hair cut by a "physiognomical haircutter and peruquier." These are all advantages of modern times; and to them may be added, "tally-ho razors, genuine magnet paste, and superior badger-hair shaving brushes." I am not a wig-wearer; but as none of us can see into futurity, nor divine what our wants may be in days to come, it is something to know that there are such things, to be had on very moderate terms, as "patent wigs of a cobweb texture," and "ventilating gossamer-web perukes, light as thistle down." Had it not been for the advertisements in the papers, these things might have altogether escaped my attention. Truly ours are extraordinary times!

I hardly dare trust myself on the subject of medicine, being sadly sceptical as to the sovereign influences of many nostrums which are freely advertised. Scarcely is there an infirmity to which humanity is liable, which some favourite pill, or potion does not profess to cure—that is, if you take enough of it. A short time ago, the "Times" newspaper, in a fit of caustic jocularity, exclaimed, "You complain that you have taken fifty pills every morning, and fifty every evening, these six weeks, and find yourself at death's door. Then take more. Roast

them for your coffee—butter them for your toast—boil them for pea-soup—stew them for kidneys—fry them—fricassee them—scallop them—eat them raw—drink them—devour them—nibble them—crack them—play with them—take them for food—take them for medicine—take them for pleasure. They are the essence of health and strength, take, take them—nothing but them, and you must live.”

This is a tolerable dose for the pill advertisers. I hope it will agree with them, and do them good.

But it is not in houses, and food, and clothing, and physic alone, that advantages are offered, but in numberless other things. The savings which are to be effected in the purchase of household furniture are “immense,” according to the advertisements, making us look coldly on our old friends and companions, our chairs and tables, as though we were half ashamed of their company. Pillar and clawfoot, Pembroke and dining-tables; cottage, cane, mahogany, and japanned chairs; French, tent, and four-post bedsteads, with hangings of all sorts; and Brussels, Turkey, Wilton, and Kidderminster carpets, may be had at twenty different establishments, every one of them the “most extensive,” the “cheapest,” and the “best” in the kingdom. Young housekeepers may well congratulate themselves on the privileges they enjoy.

Such as are disposed to add to their facilities

of obtaining knowledge, have now an admirable opportunity, for books are printed in abundance to teach languages, without the assistance of a master ; and lessons from real natives are given in French and German, “at sixpence each.” Who, under these circumstances, would rest satisfied with only a knowledge of his native tongue ?

Nor are those who, having property, are disposed to enjoy it, at all overlooked by advertisers ; for carriages, chariots, phaetons, stanhopes, tilburies, and cabs ; hunters, hackneys, ponies, carriage-horses, and cobs, of most undeniable merits, are proffered daily in the papers, with many professions of upright and liberal dealing. Delightful excursions also are planned for them, in the swiftest steamers, to the most agreeable countries, touching at the most interesting places, on the most economical terms ; so that Etna and Vesuvius, the falls of Niagara, the pyramids of Egypt, the Alhambra of Spain, the Acropolis of Athens, and the Colosseum of Rome, are no longer the improbable and impracticable places to visit that they have usually been supposed.

Thus might I go on enumerating the great advantages of modern times, and the wondrous facilities set forth in advertisements, for extending our knowledge, our comfort, and our pleasures ; but, perhaps, I shall do better by applying a

remark, and putting a searching question to my own heart, and to yours.

I have been somewhat pointed, if not severe, in my observations on the overdrawn, high-coloured advertisements of others, without sufficiently considering my own. Every man is an advertiser, and our profession of Christianity is an advertisement, wherein we undertake, not only to love one another, to do to others as we would have them do to us, to fear God and keep his commandments, but, also, to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” Titus ii. 12—14. While, then, we so freely comment on the advertisements of others, do we honestly act up to our own?

THE FRIENDLY QUIVER.

AND now, reader, let us spend together a half-hour in serious thought and solemn reflection. Though I alone speak, yet will we both be listeners, for the words spoken to thee will not be the less addressed to my own heart. It is a good and a profitable thing to meditate on the dealings of the Most High with the creatures he has formed of the dust :

The more we think of man below,
The more of guilt and shame we know ;—
The more we think of God, the more
We love, and wonder, and adore.

Servant of God ! believer in Christ ! disciple of the Redeemer ! whether the gray hairs of age, or the ruddy cheek of youth be thine ; whether thou art bending with infirmity, or walking erect with health and strength ; listen while I describe some of the arrows with which the Heavenly Archer is wont to wound, not only his enemies, but those he loves.

Shall the servant fare better than his Master ?
Shall thy Lord be wounded, and thou go free ?

He who was himself sorely wounded by the archers, oppressed and afflicted ; he who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, has too much love for thee to let thee escape without affliction. He who was made "perfect through sufferings," Heb. ii. 10, will not withhold thy needful portion. There is such a thing as wounding to heal : the skilful surgeon does this, when he cuts away the gangrene that would destroy the precious life. There is such a thing as destroying peace to save from destruction : this is done when a fire breaks out and the unconscious sleeper is rudely roused from his luxurious yet dangerous repose.

Some of the arrows of the Heavenly Archer are sent to alarm us, some to convince us of sin, some to prevent us from sinning, some to kill our passions, some to slay our infirmities, and others to make us acquainted with the Great Physician, the Almighty Healer, of his people.

If thou hast not yet been wounded, there are winged shafts in store for thee ; and if thou hast, thy spirit will go with me while I venture to describe some of the arrows that are to be found in the friendly quiver of the Heavenly Archer.

There are **THREATENING** arrows. The bow is bent, and drawn, but the arrow is not yet sent forth. Such are the general denunciations of God

against sin :—" Be sure your sin will find you out," Numb. xxxii. 23 ; " The soul that sinneth, it shall die," Ezek. xviii. 4.

Some seeds that are set in the ground spring up in a very short time, while others remain beneath the earth for a very long time. Even so it is with the seeds of sin ; whether sooner or later, up they will come : therefore, keep your eye on every threatening arrow.

Agag, the king of the Amalekites, when he was the prisoner of Saul, deceived himself into the belief that because his life had been spared for a season he was secure. " Surely," said he, " the bitterness of death is past." But, for all this, " Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal," 1 Sam. xv. 32, 33.

Shimei, who cursed David, was not punished till after David's death ; but then Solomon commanded Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, who went out and fell upon him, that he died, 1 Kings ii. 46.

Say not to thyself, " God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it," Job xxxv. 13 ; for though the arrow that is set against thee be held awhile on the string, be sure it will overtake thee at last. Sometimes days, and sometimes years, may pass before the sinner is punished. Hast thou never read the words, " Remember not

the sins of my youth, nor me transgressions," Psa. xxv. 7. Again I say, keep thine eye upon the threatening arrows of the Almighty.

There are WARNING arrows of various kinds ; and these are for ever falling around our paths. By these we are reminded of our infirmities and sins : they tell us that we are mortal creatures ; that we are liable every hour to die ; and they draw our attention to errors committed and duties neglected. But though they come near, they hardly touch us ; though we see them, we scarcely feel them ; they seem rather to whisper to us than to cry aloud. These are warning, and not wounding arrows ; and well is it for those who profit by them.

The ruin of a neighbour, the death of an acquaintance, the burning of a house in an adjacent street, and all the afflicting incidents of life we witness, are warning arrows : we should prepare for trial when others are troubled. The punishment, also, of the errors of others is a warning to us to correct our own. Never disregard a warning arrow.

It was a warning arrow that reached Joseph in a dream, when he was forced to fly from his home : " Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word ; for Herod will seek the young

child to destroy him," Matt. ii. 13. The arrow was regarded, and the infant Redeemer escaped.

Warning arrows are merciful things, and often prevent much of sin and sorrow. Be quick to discern them, prompt to apply them, and ever ready to profit by their friendly instruction.

There are **BROKEN** arrows, that shiver in pieces or ever they reach the heart. Such are, particular threatened evils and expected calamities that, after all, come not upon us ; dangers in which we are protected, and destructions from which we are snatched as brands from the burning, in consequence of prayer.

Are we threatened with a lawsuit that would ruin us, but it is given up ? Are we at sea in a storm, with nothing but shipwreck before us, yet reach the land in safety ? Are we afflicted with a disease that seems to be unto death, and yet recover our health ? These are broken arrows, that would have destroyed us had they not been shivered in pieces.

It was such an arrow as this that was directed against Nineveh, "that great city," wherein were more than six score thousand persons that could not discern between their right hand and their left hand ; and also much cattle, Jonah iv. 11.

Such an arrow also was aimed against Hezekiah : "Set thine house in order : for thou shalt die, and

not live," Isa. xxxviii. 1 ; but it was broken ere it reached him, for he turned his face to the wall and prayed, and the word of the Lord came to him by Isaiah, "I will add unto thy days fifteen years," Isa. xxxviii. 5.

Value prayer, love prayer, practise prayer. Hast thou sinned? Is the arrow about to smite thee? Turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, that the arrow may be broken. "Return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," Isa. lv. 7.

There are SWIFT arrows, that reach us almost as soon as the sin is committed which calls them forth. When a child touches the fire with his finger, it is a swift arrow that wounds it. These arrows have smitten God's people and God's enemies in all ages; they have been curses to the latter, and blessings to the former.

It was a swift arrow that struck Pharaoh when the river was turned into blood; when he was visited with a murrain on the cattle, with boils and blains, with frogs and flies, hail, locusts, and darkness; when the first-born of Egypt were slain, and when his host was overwhelmed in the Red Sea, Exod. xiv. 23—28.

It was a swift arrow that smote those young men who mocked the prophet Elisha: "Go up, thou bald head," had scarcely passed their lips

before the bears came that tore them in pieces, 2 Kings ii. 23, 24. And it was a swift arrow that struck Ananias and Sapphira when they lied to the Holy Ghost, Acts v. 1—11.

Tempt not the Lord, lest an arrow, not only swift, but fatal, go forth from his quiver: lest he say, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," Luke xii. 20; or swear in his wrath, Ye "shall not enter into my rest," Heb. iii. 11.

There are **STRONG** arrows, that are not to be resisted; they come as shot by the hand of a strong bowman, weighty and powerful, and bear down all opposition. Truth is a strong arrow, and its flight is irresistible. It is like the spear of Abishai, that slew three hundred men, 2 Sam. xxiii. 18.

All sudden convictions are strong arrows, whether they proceed from God's holy word or God's providences. Job was struck by a strong arrow when he cried out, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," Job xlii. 5, 6.

It was a strong arrow that our blessed Lord drew against the Pharisees when he was at Jerusalem, and sorely it wounded them; for "no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any

man from that day forth ask him any more questions," Matt. xxii. 46.

Saul was struck to the heart by one of these arrows as he journeyed to Damascus, breathing out persecutions and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. Well might he fall to the ground when he saw the great light, and heard the words, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?—it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," Acts ix. 4, 5; for then it was that a strong arrow entered his bosom.

Struggle not against convictions, but humble thyself beneath the mighty power of God; then shall his strong arrows be suspended, or otherwise prove a blessing to thy soul.

There are **SHARP** arrows, that win their way freely, and inflict pain, smarting, and agony. They make the wounded writhe, for they pierce even to the dividing asunder of the joints and the marrow.

Bodily affliction is a sharp arrow, as all know who have lain beneath the knife of the surgeon, or are acquainted with the rheumatism, gout, gravel, stone, and other painful diseases. Job knew something of a sharp arrow when he took a potsherd to scrape himself withal, and when his friends sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him, Job ii. 13.

Bereavements are sharp arrows, and no doubt they have wounded thee in thy time ; for few altogether escape them. Loss of property is a sharp arrow, too, and not many are there who endure its smart patiently. And then, what sharp arrows are a wounded spirit and sorrow for sin ! Even the apostle Paul cried out, in the bitterness of his spirit, “O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?” Rom. vii. 24.

As the sharpest arrow, however, will not, without God’s grace, be profitable to thy soul, seek that grace in whatever way thou art wounded.

There are POISONED arrows, that not only wound and tear us with their sharp points, but that rankle and fester within us on account of some burning quality that attends them ; such as heavy afflictions and overwhelming trouble that we bring on ourselves by our thoughtlessness, our folly, or our sins.

When God sends affliction, the arrow may be sharp, and yet not be poisoned ; but when we bring affliction on ourselves, we poison the arrow, and destroy our own peace. The arrow of a guilty conscience is indeed a poisoned arrow.

It was a poisoned arrow that struck David when Nathan said unto him, “Thou art the man,” 2 Sam. xii. 7. And it was another that

wounded the poor prodigal, when he was constrained to return home to his compassionate parent, and to say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," Luke xv. 21.

And, oh! what a poisoned arrow must that have been which struck home to the heart of Judas, when "he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself," Matt. xxvii. 5.

Sanctified affliction is a precious thing; but pray fervently, pray incessantly, that thou mayest never be wounded by a poisoned arrow. If, however, it should be the case that thou shouldest ever be struck down by one of these rankling and raging shafts, go to the Great Physician: "Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time," 1 Peter v. 6.

Besides these arrows that I have mentioned, there are many more; and thou must make up thy account to be wounded by them. Servant of God! believer in Christ! disciple of the Redeemer! whether the gray hairs of age, or the ruddy cheek of youth be thine; whether thou art bending with infirmity or walking erect with health and strength; the threatening arrow shall hang over thee, the warning arrow shall fall near

thee, the broken arrow shall be shivered in pieces at thy feet, and the swift arrow, the strong arrow, and the sharp arrow, shall wound thee for thy good. So sure as thou sinnest, a poisoned arrow will overtake thee, and bring thee to the ground; yet, though cast down, thou shalt not be destroyed; though sorely perplexed, thou shalt not be in despair; for He whom thou servest is mighty to redeem. He has found a ransom for thy sins; a price is paid for thine iniquities. Here thou shalt share his grace, and hereafter his glory: "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee," Psa. xci. 4—7. Though arrows of all kinds fly around thee, humbly, hopefully, trustfully go on thy way, thinking lightly of earthly calamity. Let this be the language of thy heart to the Lord of glory:

O God of grace ! whate'er may be my woes,
Thy powerful arm shall shield me from my foes;
Though fierce and mighty in their wrath they be,
Thou art Almighty !—I will trust in Thee.

THE REFINING-POT.

I CANNOT but think, reader, that if you have half an hour's leisure, and are not likely to be broken in upon while listening to what I have to say on the subject of the Refining Pot, you will be benefited by what will be set before you. The subject is serious ; you must, therefore, expect it to be treated seriously, but I trust that you will find enough in it of narrative and variety, to prevent it from becoming tedious and wearisome.

The sun, on the evening of a sabbath day, was throwing its setting beams upon an ancient mansion, whose turrets and projecting windows were partly hung with ivy, and the rooks and crows were flying heavily towards their place of repose, when an old man walked slowly across the wide hall of the mansion, and seated himself on a chair in a recess formed by one of the projecting windows. A table stood before him, on which lay a large Bible, wide open. The old man began to read, and in a short time he was joined by a friend, who took his seat on the other side of the table.

It was a delightful evening, for the singing

birds had not yet returned to rest ; the trees were arrayed in their freshest verdure ; the sky, for the most part, save here and there, where a silvery cloud added to its beauty, was of the deepest blue ; while, in the west, the retiring sun shot upwards its golden glory.

To the lowly disciple of Christ, who regards God as his heavenly Father, and worships him in spirit and in truth, the earth and the heavens appear to possess additional charms on the sabbath-day. Not that the birds sing more pleasantly, or that the tree puts forth a greener leaf ; not that the sky is brighter, or that the sun is adorned with greater splendour ; but, because the services of the sanctuary raise, and purify, and make grateful, the heart of the Christian, so that he regards the works of God with a more devotional spirit. And, while the kindly influence of the gospel of peace steals over him, and he feels that “the Lord is gracious, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy,” he looks around him with joy, and is ready to cry aloud, in the fulness of his heart, “The heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament showeth his handywork.”

The hall, wherein the two persons were sitting, was very spacious, and paved with stone, and an armorial bearing of stained glass glittered in the

window. Around the oak-panelled walls hung portraits of some of the ancient owners of the place ; but the colour of the pictures had faded ; the canvass was tattered, and the massy frames were much impaired by time. The mansion, in a distant period, had been a religious establishment, and the cruel, and bigoted, and superstitious delusions of Popery long found a stronghold where, now, the two lowly servants of the Lord, professing a purer faith, and practising a more holy life and conversation, were sharing the unsearchable riches of Christ, by taking sweet counsel together, and reading in company the word of the Most High.

Save that of the warbling birds around the mansion, there was no sound heard, but the voice of the two persons sitting together, given back, as it were, in a lower tone by the echoing walls. The very spirit of repose seemed to dwell there ; nor was that peace withheld which the world neither gives nor takes away.

The elder personage of the two was a sober-looking man. Threescore and ten years had passed over him, his hair was gray, and his countenance bespoke him to be a reflecting Christian. He had that gravity in his face which might, at the first glance, have been taken for severity ; but the kindliness of his manner, the subdued tone of

his voice, and the words which fell from his lips, fully proved him to be a servant of the Redeemer, fervent in spirit, and anxiously desirous to persuade his fellow-sinners to accompany him to the fountain opened for all uncleanness, and to partake of the living waters of salvation.

Being much older than his companion, who listened to him with attention and respect, he acted the part of a Christian counsellor, and frequently paused in reading the Scriptures, and made remarks of his own, with an air of earnestness and anxiety which showed how desirous he was to confirm the heart of his companion in his love and reverence for Divine truth. He had found too much benefit from the word of God not to recommend it to others, well knowing that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

After reading and conversing upon many parts of the word of God, he came to the passage, "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire;" which having read, he pulled off his spectacles, and, placing them by the side of the Bible, thus, in an earnest manner, addressed his companion :

If God trieth "the hearts and the reins;" if

“he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver ;” if “ he shall bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil ; what manner of men ought we to be to endure such a trial ? and in what manner of works should we abound ?”

How necessary it is that we should not deceive ourselves, but rather seek to know the real value of what we possess. This knowledge is necessary to the young and to the old, to the rich and to the poor ; but, of all the people in the world, it is the most necessary to those who are looking far beyond the present world, believing that, after the joys and sorrows of earth are passed, there will be an “ inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away ;” that there is “ a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,” prepared for the lowly followers of the Lamb, the humble and sincere disciples of Jesus Christ. If our possessions are partly dross and partly pure gold, how shall we estimate them aright ? If we ask the opinion of our fellow-sinners, they will lead us astray. If we inquire of our own hearts, they are sure to deceive us ; the only way, then, appears to be, to put them all into the crucible of the Scriptures ; the refining-pot of God’s most holy word.

Had we to live in this world only, it might

be easy enough to find out the worth of our possessions without casting them into the refining-pot ; but as we are to live in another world, also, and as God is to sit in judgment on us, “ as a Refiner and purifier of silver,” they must be put into the refining-pot before we shall know their value. It would be folly to value that very highly to-day which can be of no use to us to-morrow ; and so, in like manner, will it be foolish to think too much of those possessions in time, which will be valueless in eternity.

We can only tell the worth of what is put into the refining-pot, by that which comes out of it after it has passed through the action of the fire. The Bible is before us ; let us, then, humbly looking for the teaching of God the Holy Spirit, try the worth of earthly things, by casting them into the refining-pot.

But what shall we first cast therein ? Let us take all that is considered desirable among mankind ; the power, the riches, the greatness, the glory, yea, all that the heart of man naturally desireth ; all “ the lust of the eye, and the pride of life ;” let us keep back nothing which the world considers valuable ; let all be put into the refining-pot, that we may know what the fire will spare, and what it will consume. Let us begin with the kings of the earth, clad in robes of purple

and crimson, with their sceptres in their hands, and their sparkling diadems upon their brows; let us take their might and their majesty, with all their goodly possessions, and see what will remain of them after they have been placed in the refining-pot, and passed through the fire. Alas! the possessions of kings must be tried in the same manner as the possessions of other men, for "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him;" while "the wicked" (even though they are kings) "shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." God hath said unto kings, as well as unto others, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return;" and "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." When "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed," "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.—Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling."

We see, then, that the might, and majesty, and glorious possessions of kings are no more than the dust of the balance before God. If a king be allowed to wear a crown in heaven, as well as on earth, it will not be because he was a ruler of men, but because he was a servant of God. Such kings as trust in Christ and reign in righteousness in this world, will reign in glory in the world to come; but other kings may expect to be broken "with a rod of iron," and "dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel." To the lowliest of the children of men it is said, as well as to a king, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

Thus it appears that the pride, and splendour, and all the worldly possessions of a king, are but dross before Him who is "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Of all the glorious things which we put into the crucible, not a particle remains. They are all consumed, there is nothing left in the refining-pot.

Let us try the merchants, and all those who compass sea and land, to bring back from the remote parts of the earth that which is valuable. They have crossed the trackless deep; they have endured peril and hardship, and have returned richly laden with their choicest merchandise. Bring their gold and ivory, their costly bales and

precious spices ; bring all they have obtained, and put them into the refining-pot.

If these things were neither obtained in the fear of the Lord, nor used to extend his glory, they shall not endure. They will yield their owners no comfort in death, nor eternal treasures. The time shall come when “the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn ;—for no man buyeth their merchandise any more.” They have compassed the waters, but have not sought out “the river of the water of life.” They have crossed the mountain and the valley to obtain what “satisfieth not,” but what will their merchandise avail them in the dark “valley of the shadow of death?” Had they striven to obtain “the Pearl of great price,” their possessions would have been sanctified by Divine grace ; their merchandise would have been “holiness to the Lord,” and they would have possessed themselves of true wisdom : “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies ; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways

are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Look at the refining-pot; the costly cargoes and precious things which were put into it are gone; the trial-fire has consumed them all.

Seeing that the merchandise of the world will not bear the trial of the refining-pot, let us seek after that which will endure it, even heavenly wisdom; for "wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding." When the merchandise of the world is consumed, when the ships are destroyed, and the sea itself dried up, then will the promise of eternal life retain its value, for the hope of the righteous shall not be cut off; it will endure the trial of the refining-pot.

"Every man," untaught of God, "at his best estate is altogether vanity." Let us look, then, at the possessions of the learned and the worldly-wise; men who have laboured hard to obtain knowledge, whose company is desired, whose names are held in great estimation, and who are looked upon as the lights of the world. The books are many which they have compiled to instruct and amuse us on earth, but where are those which they have written to guide us to heaven? We will put their works and their reputation together into the refining-pot.

The worldly-wise possess all knowledge but the knowledge of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ; and lacking this, all other knowledge is vain: "Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh." "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." If this is the case, how could we reasonably hope that such wisdom would endure the trial of the refining-pot? See, the books and the reputation and all belonging to the worldly-wise which we put into the crucible—all is consumed; not a fragment can be found in the refining-pot; not an atom is left for eternity!

It is not earthly, but heavenly wisdom which will endure: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments." If the worldly-wise knew more of the plague of their own hearts; if they knew more of the glad tidings of salvation; if they knew Him, whom to know is eternal life; then would their works endure: but now, they perish in the fire, and abide not the trial of the refining-pot.

What are the possessions of the mighty men of war, who have dyed their swords, and rolled their garments in blood? They have dared to meet danger and death; their names are recorded in history, and repeated by thousands, as the

champions of their country, and the conquerors of the earth: "Verily, they have their reward;" the homage of their fellow men in their lives, and a marble statue over their mouldering remains, But bring the homage of mankind, and the sculptured marble, and the page of history which records their deeds, and cast them at once into the refining-pot. How will they bear the trial-fire of the word of the Most High: "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy;" "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another;" "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;" "Scatter thou the people that delight in war?"

The possessions of the warrior are consumed as flax, and the refining-pot is again empty.

Let not him who delighteth in war pretend to love God: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Had the mighty warriors of the world been readers of the Bible, they might have been startled by the words, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." Had they been sol-

diers of Christ, they would have "resisted lusts which war against the soul." Had they fought under the banner of the cross, they might have been "more than conquerors," and, instead of shedding the blood of others, have served Him who shed his blood for them. As it is, their hands are stained with the blood of their fellow-sinners, and "instruments of cruelty are in their habitations." Oh for the reign of the Redeemer, when they shall "beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks;" when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." The possessions of the warrior can never endure the fiery trial of the refining-pot.

There are in the world those who delight in laying up silver and gold, and cheat themselves of the mercies which God has so abundantly bestowed upon the children of men; who delight to see their golden store increase, though it cost them their peace here, and their salvation hereafter. Gold is their desire, gold is their delight, and gold is the god they idolatrously worship.

We must put that gold into the refining-pot, and see if it be as valuable as it appears to be.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay

up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

"Labour not to be rich; cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

"Lose his own soul!" What a mockery then are riches! All that we heaped together in the refining-pot is destroyed. If riches could protect us from calamity; if they could preserve us from pain, disease, and death; if they could purchase an inheritance in heaven; then every man might be anxious to obtain them: but if they cannot do these things, then "set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth." "Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith." The covetous man makes but a bad bargain, for riches can at best but serve him a little in this life, while "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Though the riches of the world may endure for

a few short years, they never will endure the trial of the refining-pot.

But let us now put something into the refining-pot that appears more likely to stand the fire. Let us take the deeds of a man renowned for his goodness among mankind. He has helped to build churches, and erect hospitals; he has fasted and prayed. The almshouses on the hill were raised at his expense, and the charity-boys were clothed by him. His name is inscribed in gold letters as the patron of the poor, and a thousand tongues, far and wide, praise his piety and benevolence. But have these things been done for God's glory or for his own? To extend the Redeemer's kingdom or his own reputation? Put his piety and benevolence—put all his deeds into the refining-pot. See how his works perish in the flame; for they were all done to obtain the praise of man. They may give reputation in life, but they will yield no hope in death; they will neither preserve their possessor from hell, nor guide him to heaven: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" "The hypocrite's hope shall perish: whose hope shall

be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web." Nothing that hypocrisy can bring, will bear for a moment the trial-fire of the refining-pot.

Come, lastly, thou tried and tempest-tossed believer, whose heart is sinking within thee on account of thy manifold unworthiness, and of the hiding of God's countenance; who considerest thyself poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked; bring the little that thou hast, that we may cast it into the refining pot. Haply He, whose are the silver and the gold, may open the treasures of his grace, making thy little much, so that thou mayest yet abound in enduring riches.

Thou feelest thyself to be a sinner, and repentest of thine iniquity. Though sadly tried, and sorely tempted by unbelief, yet hast thou faith in the death and sufferings of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Thou art a sinner. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Thou believest in the Son of God, and that "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Thy repentance and thy faith are the gift of God, they are his work in thee; and resting upon him, they are uninjured

in the refining-pot. Thou hast no costly deeds to offer up as a sacrifice ; thy heart is broken, and thy spirit cast down on account of thy utter unworthiness ; but “ the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit : a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” Take courage, then, thou fearful servant of Christ, for thou art a child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. When the majesty of the king faileth, and the merchandise of the merchant is consumed ; when the weapons of the warrior are broken, and the wisdom of the worldly wise is forgotten ; when the gold of the covetous has crumbled in the dust, and the hope of the hypocrite has perished, thy repentance and thy faith shall endure. A new song shall be put into thy mouth, and thou shalt “ enter into the joy of thy Lord.”

Of all that we have tried in the refining-pot, the repentance and the faith of a pardoned sinner have alone endured the fire. Let us, then, humbly seek repentance and faith of Him who can alone bestow them.

The sun had now set, and the shadows of evening were gathering around. The old man closed his Bible in a manner which showed his reverence for the word of God, and rising from his seat he once more slowly retraced his steps across the spacious hall, attended by his companion.

ON FOX-HUNTING.

WERE I calling on the fast-riding, fence-leaping Mazeppas of the turf and the field to meet me at Oakwood, Kentland Copse, or on the Common of Furzy Scrubs, they would hardly like to be limited to a half hour's pastime ; but my readers, being more sober, will be sooner satisfied. Think not, however, that I am going to draw a cover, or to drag you through the woods, thorns, and furze bushes, though the title I have chosen might almost lead you to suppose so. If you go with me, neither a red coat nor boots and spurs will be necessary.

Perhaps you may say, "What have we to do with fox-hunting or fox-hunters? There are some, nay, many, whom the subject might suit, but it is not at all adapted to us. It is quite out of our way : we are not fox-hunters." Now I am not quite certain of this. Nay, to speak plainly, it is because I half suspect that many of you are fox-hunters, that I thus address you.

I half suspect that, in some degree, most of us are fox-hunters ; that, in following our favourite

objects, "Hark away!" is the cry of us all. Every one pursues his own game, and hedges and ditches, and all other impediments, are cleared by us with wonderful dexterity.

A fox-hunter is thought little of by his companions in his break-neck diversion, unless he be a man of energy. Caution and prudence are not the most striking among fox-hunting qualities. He must be thoroughly ardent and impetuous to join in the chase.

Not only is the fox-hunter wrong in this, that he pursues trifles with ardour, and important things with apathy; but, during the chase his whole soul is absorbed in his amusement: he has neither ear, eye, nor heart for anything else. When, then, I see any one so vehemently ardent in any favourite pursuit, as to make him unmindful of things equally important, I call him a fox-hunter. The object he pursues may be good, nay, excellent, but if it stop his ear, blind his eye, or otherwise render him insensible to things equally good and equally excellent, as I said before, that man, in my estimation, is a fox-hunter.

Having thus far explained myself, I will proceed to notice some of the fox-hunting pursuits which have at different times brought, and are still bringing, so many sportsmen into the field. I trust you now begin to perceive that, according to

my definition, a man may be a fox-hunter without wearing a red coat, boots, and spurs ; and go fox-hunting without clearing double fences, or risking his neck over five-barred gates. The objects of mankind are various, and even the best of them are sometimes moderately, and sometimes immoderately pursued : it is the immoderate pursuit of them that will principally call forth my remarks ; which, whether just or unjust, will, at least, not be made ill-naturedly.

To render myself as intelligible as possible, let me divide my subject into three parts ;—pursuits which are wicked ; pursuits which are indifferent ; and pursuits which are praiseworthy. Among the first, with which I trust you have nothing to do, drinking, gambling and fighting, may be enumerated. Among the second may be mentioned politics, political economy, currency, corn-laws, public companies, hydropathy, mesmerism, dress, and a score of others. And among the last, savings banks, temperance societies, abolition of slavery, missions, Sunday schools, distribution of religious tracts, and circulation of the Bible. A word upon each of these.

When a man falls in love with the glass, he is pretty sure to go down hill all his days ; and yet how many are there who boast of the bottles they can empty, or the cups they can drink ! Men are

not apt to boast of their infirmities—the ague, fever, rheumatism, and gout; why then should they boast of their drinking disease, which is far worse than all the rest put together, since it not only jeopardizes the body, but the soul? A leap at full cry over a brook and a double fence, is a daring and desperate deed; but what is this when compared to a leap into destruction?

As Epsom and Ascot races come round, numbers who have business to attend, and whose situation in life has not qualified them for such unenviable pursuits, are seized with the mania of gambling. By their conversation they appear as much at home in making up “a book” and taking the “long odds,” as though they had been born at Newmarket, and brought up in a betting-box, with the first jockeys of the day for their companions. Steeple chases, yacht races, fights, wrestling, and walking matches, come all alike to them, so that a bet can be made, though the race-course is their favourite amusement. They will tell you the points of a good horse as familiarly as if they kept a stud of their own. Talk of horses, and you will see them in their glory. They are intimate with the exploits of Eclipse and Flying Childers, Diamond and Hambletonian, Beeswing and Cotherstone.

Some have a taste for prize-fighting, and a

strange taste it is. They love to read of barbarous encounters when they cannot see them, and interlard their conversation with the low epithets of pugilists. The supporters of drinking, gambling, and fighting run such imminent risks, and are so reckless in their abandonment, that I cannot but class them among the most desperate of fox hunters.

We now come to pursuits which may be said to be indifferent, because to engage in them is not necessarily either a vice or a virtue. Politics shall be first mentioned; and in politics many have made worse plunges than they have in fox-hunting. To entertain an opinion on points affecting the well being of our country is natural, and it is natural, also, for a man of warm feelings to feel warmly on such matters; but what a sight it is to see men, who ought to be brothers, rabid as mad dogs and running over with bitterness. Since party politics zeal "separateth very friends," and makes them "sharper than a thorn hedge" one towards another, I am doing party politicians no very great injustice in ranking political zealots among fox-hunters.

In like manner, when a man engages in any other pursuit or question, say political economy, or the currency, or the corn-laws, he is justified in concentrating the resources of his mind in his

pursuit ; but if, forgetful of the courtesies of life, and the commandment, "Love one another," he becomes arrogant, arbitrary, and dictatorial, urging on the fiery steed of his passions unduly, wantonly, and recklessly, how can I call him by a more appropriate name than that of a fox-hunter ?

Did you never hear of any taking the field in a high-flying temper, standing up in their stirrups, eager as "greyhounds in the slips straining for the start ;" ready to go all lengths in their pursuit of shares in private speculations or public companies ? When once the money-getting mania affects a man's heart and soul, it urges him onward at all hazards. No game comes amiss to him ; mining, metal, waterwork, railroad, steamboat, or banking shares—all or any of them will do : away he goes ! You may call such a man what you will, but I must call him a fox-hunter.

I have known some who have been so inordinately attached to hydropathy, so much in love with the water system of curing diseases, as almost to induce the suspicion that a worse calamity, in their opinion, might happen to the world than a second deluge ; and I have met with others so carried away by mesmerism, with its somnolency, somnambulism, clairvoyance, and introvision, as to credit the wildest visions that a distempered

imagination could invent. Now, I am not at all inclined to dispute the position, that the water system, judiciously applied, may, in many cases, be attended with advantage ; and that mesmerism may have produced some extraordinary effects ; but when one is thus, as it were, readymounted, booted, and spurred to run all lengths, and to overleap the highest barriers of probability, he certainly is duly entitled to figure among-fox-hunters.

I may be thought to be a bold man to venture even on the supposition of a lady going fox-hunting ; and, certainly, the subject must be handled by me very tenderly, though truth requires me to admit, that I have numbered some fair fox-hunters among my friends and acquaintance. A fox's brush is not the only thing in the world that is thought worth attaining ; there are furs of other animals, and there are also such things as silks and satins in the world, as well as precious stones and jewelry. It would bring a blush on my cheek to know that I had made an ill-natured remark ; but so strong is my imagination, that I can suppose the case just possible that a fair fox-hunter might occasionally be found in full cry, not only after a piece of point-lace, or a cashmere shawl, but even after a fan or a feather.

It may be, my readers, that at present I have

hardly come home to you ; but it would neither be wise nor safe for you to conclude, because you have not joined in the chase after any of the things already mentioned by me, that you never go fox-hunting after others. As I have a little more to say, I do not absolutely despair of finding out your hunting-grounds yet, and perhaps I may even stumble, unexpectedly, against your hunter, as he stands ready saddled and bridled in the stable.

Let us now proceed to things that are praiseworthy. One man is of opinion that the peace, prosperity, and happiness of society, depend mainly on the prudence and forethought of its members ; and therefore regards savings banks as very important things ; so important, indeed, that he has quite a mania for them, highly extolling all who encourage them, and blaming those who do not, though they may encourage twenty other good things. He regards savings banks as almost a specific against public and private, national and domestic calamity. His principle is a good one, but he follows it out too urgently. It is his hobby, and on this hobby he goes out fox-hunting.

Another man is an intemperate temperance man ; a red-hot teetotaller. His object is also good, but he regards it as better than all others, and has a private quarrel with you, if you do not

regard it so too. You may practise all the cardinal virtues and all the Christian graces ; but if you have not signed the pledge, you have a blot on your escutcheon and a mark on your brow. Surely this has some resemblance to fox-hunting, and such a one is very like a fox-hunter.

“Talk not to me,” says a third, “about your sobriety and your temperance ; I have no notion of such nibbling ; I like things on a larger scale. Slavery is one of the blackest curses that covetousness and rapacity have flung upon the world ; and if your heart and soul are not set on its abolition, you have but little humanity.” Now, I dearly love freedom, and heartily hate slavery ; ay, and I am a thorough abolitionist too ; yet still I hold the possibility of an abolitionist being a fox-hunter.

“You make,” says a fourth, “a great noise about anti-slavery ; but, to my mind, it is much more important to attend to the soul than to the body. The body will soon moulder in the grave ; but the soul, the immortal soul, will live for ever. To abolish slavery would certainly be an excellent thing, but I cannot think it right, nay, I absolutely think it wrong, that a man should give his money as an abolitionist, and yet not subscribe to a missionary society.” Here, again, I discover the “Hark away !” of the fox-hunter.

“No doubt,” rejoins a fifth, “that missionary societies are excellent institutions ; but we ought first to look to the wants of our own country before we go abroad to redress the wants of others. ‘Charity begins at home.’ Sunday-schools are the things to which we should attend. ‘As the twig is bent, the tree will be inclined.’ The welfare of mankind depends on the proper education of youth ; and he who is not an active supporter of Sunday-schools has very little Christian philanthropy, though he supports a dozen other benevolent institutions.” If the fox-hunter’s “Hark away !” was heard in the last example, his “Tantivy !” is heard in the present.

“Sunday-schools are not to be compared in importance with the distribution of religious tracts,” says one, who sees in every tract a seed that is to spring up, and bud, and bear fruit a hundred fold. “Nor can the distribution of tracts be compared with the circulation of the Bible,” cries another. “The word of God is the great engine to be employed in evangelizing the world. You do but little with all your subscriptions, unless you subscribe to the Bible Society.” The contention grows warm, until these brother Christians might, with very great propriety, shake each other by the hand as brother fox-hunters !

Thus have I somewhat humorously alluded to a few of the many pursuits in which fox-hunters engage, and I make no doubt that many others will present themselves to your minds. You may smile at my odd way of treating the subject, but I think that you will hardly call in question the correctness of my conclusions.

When anxious to put things in a strong light, we are somewhat given to caricature ; and, no doubt, I have caricatured on the present occasion ; but in caricatures strong likenesses are often found, and some of you, in my fancies, may discover your own faces. If for a moment I have dipped my pen in satire, it has been, in a playful spirit, to point out an infirmity in others which I have long since discovered in myself ; for, in one way or other, Old Humphrey has been a fox-hunter all his days.

And, now, what practical lesson have I sought to set forth by my remarks on fox-hunting ? Simply this, that in pursuing even the best and highest objects, charity and kindness should never be lost sight of ; that in provoking each other to good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, a sound judgment should be blended with Christian forbearance, and an ardent zeal with Christian love.

ON THE TRACT CALLED “ THOMAS BROWN.”

WHEN gazing on the goodliest tree of the forest, we never think of asking who it was that set the acorn in the ground ; it is otherwise, however, when regarding works of art. Every production of the chisel, the pencil, or the pen, that becomes popular, excites some degree of curiosity to ascertain the source whence it proceeded. It may neither be remarkable for genius in its design nor talent in its execution, but that circumstance does not prevent our desire to obtain some information respecting its author.

Again and again have I been asked to furnish some information respecting the popular tract called “ Thomas Brown ; or, a Dialogue on Sunday Morning.” This tract has now (1849) been fluttering and flying about in cities, towns, and villages, for more than thirty years. The hawker has carried it in his pack, the traveller has dropped it on the road from his gig, the shopkeeper has read it leaning on his counter, and the cottager has conned it over by his fire-side ; it has wandered

from Europe to Africa and Asia, it has crossed the Atlantic to America, and few tracts are better known.

That which, at one period of time, is of no moment, often becomes, at another, an object of interest. So long as "Thomas Brown" was limited in its circulation, there was no reason for advertising to its original obscurity; but now that it has become both popular and influential, there may be some propriety in making known its origin and its history. Who shall say that the humblest rightly directed effort to do good shall be wholly ineffectual? or, indeed, that it shall not become eminently successful? Should my readers call in question the justice of this remark, let them ponder the following observations on "Thomas Brown."

It must be now about thirty-three years ago, since a respected relative of mine was engaged, during the leisure hours of an active life, in a series of literary undertakings, all intended to arrest the progress of vice, and promote the cause of virtue. One of these was the preparation of an abridged Bible, a work of time, labour, and great difficulty, which at length arrived at maturity. The book was not the substance of Holy Scriptures condensed in common language, but an abridgment of the Bible in the very words of the Bible—the abridgment being exclusively effected by cancelling

all repetitions. Biblical readers know that words, verses, and even chapters, are repeated in the Bible; but in this abridgment neither chapter, verse, nor word that could be dispensed with, without injury to the sense, was repeated; so that the whole was of a reduced size.

It was not intended that this book should, in any case, become the substitute for the Holy Scriptures, but that it should be put into the hands of young people, as smaller than the Bible, that they might, at an early age, the more readily acquire a knowledge of God's holy word, which is able to make us "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," 2 Tim. iii. 15. The work is now most likely under lock and key, a mere memorial of labour and perseverance; but I can bear record to the single-eyed object of the compiler through the whole of his career, as well as to the humble and instant abandonment of his design, the moment he knew that the late Rev. Josiah Pratt entertained grave doubts as to the effect that might be produced by its publication.

Another undertaking was to set aside, as far as possible, the immoral songs that were vended in our adjoining manufacturing town; and in this undertaking I joined. To buy up the faulty publications, and to write and print others of a less objectionable kind, was the adopted course, but

it did not succeed. When the printer found that his customers would have the faulty songs, he failed not to supply them. It was his apparent interest to do so ; but it is never a man's real interest to do evil. “ If Balak,” said Balaam, “ would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord,” Numb. xxiv. 13.

Now and then, even at this remote period of time, I find among my papers some of the poetical products of my pen, in furtherance of the laudable end we had in view ; but perhaps the less I say about their poetical merit the better. They certainly were not “ inscribed with immortality.”

It was at the time of these literary undertakings that my worthy relative handed me a rough sketch, in a kind of poetical prose, of a dialogue which he thought might be made useful to the working people on the farm attached to the mansion at which he resided. From this rough sketch I wrote the tract “ Thomas Brown,” with the simple object in view already stated ; and though since then,

“ My brow by time has graven been,
And grey hairs on my head are seen,”

it seems but as yesterday when the report was made to me of the effect produced, by my poor doggerel verses, on the rustic throng for whose benefit they were composed. The sing-song stanzas,

and the plain tale they told, were just suited to the taste and comprehension of the simple-minded country people, who were caught at once while listening to the artless history of the sabbath-breaker. No sooner were the words read,

“ Where have you been wandering about, Thomas Brown,
In your jacket so out of repair?”

“ A ramble I’ve been o’er the meadows so green,
And I work in the jacket I wear,”—

than a general expression of interest and pleasure lighted up their faces. Never was a more attentive auditory. With breathless attention they drank in, with greedy ears, the words of the reader, until Thomas Brown was represented as attending the village church. The description that followed won every heart.

Again and again, on different evenings, was “Thomas Brown” read to the rustic throng, who listened with undiminished interest. One of them, I think it was Betty the housemaid, committed the whole piece to memory; and a farm-servant declared, that “the man must have a rare yeadpiece (headpiece) that writ ‘Thomas Brown.’ ”

Soon after this the dialogue appeared in print in different editions. A young friend, a printer, applied for, and obtained permission to publish it. The late Dr. Booker, if I am not misinformed, had an edition printed for his own circulation.

The number of editions published by Houlston and Son, and by the Religious Tract Society, (with some revision and additions by one of the Committee,) must be very considerable; in short, hundreds of thousands of copies must have been spread abroad in the world. How strange is oftentimes the working of human events! The persevering effort of years, in the “Abridged Bible” of my valued relative, appears dead and buried; while the impulsive effort of an hour, in the rough sketch of the dialogue he sent me, will, most likely, live in “Thomas Brown” for centuries to come. What was intended for the community is now hidden in privacy, while the verses written for a few rustics alone is appealing to the population of different countries. What short-sighted beings we are, with all our boasted wisdom!

Perhaps, while thus avowing myself to be the author of “Thomas Brown,” I may as well admit, that from my truant pen have fallen many productions of a similar kind, wherein I have sought, by commonplace doggerel poetry, to catch attention in order to impart profitable instruction. “Honest Jack the Sailor,” “The two Widows,” “There’s no time to spare,” “Ten thousand bright Guineas,” and “The Infidel Blacksmith,” are among them.

When "Thomas Brown" was first printed, I felt heartily ashamed ; having persuaded myself that I had some aptitude for poetry, the homely composition of the Dialogue humbled me. So long as it remained written only, and was regarded as an off-hand production addressed to a few country people, it did not offend me ; but when it came forth publicly, I shrank from the humiliation of being considered its author. Many a time in company, with a blushing face, have I smarted under the galling lash of complimentary remarks addressed to me as the author of "Thomas Brown."

Among the admirers of "Thomas Brown" was a friend, who took a lively interest in spreading the tract as widely as he could ; and many a packet of the Dialogue accompanied the merchandise he sent to different parts of the world. "Thomas Brown" made its appearance in Van Diemen's Land at an early period of its history ; and I cannot but think that to the exertions of the friend alluded to, both at home and abroad, much of the popularity of the tract may fairly be ascribed.

On one occasion I was present when a sabbath-breaker, who had been reprov'd, replied that she was not so bad a person as people supposed her to be, for that she could repeat many passages of

Holy Scripture by heart, and the whole of "Thomas Brown," from the first verse to the last. It did not appear that the Dialogue, in her case, had been very influential, but the occurrence at least showed how high the tract stood in her estimation.

On another occasion, when conversing with an educated friend on the subject of poetry, he burst out into this complimentary ejaculation, "I had rather be the author of 'Thomas Brown' than the writer of an epic poem!" To withhold altogether these proofs of the estimation in which the tract has been held, would be an affectation of modesty; though I am well aware, that to add to their number might justly be censured as unblushing egotism. Let me pass on to a few details of another kind.

"Thomas Brown" used to be familiarly chanted in the streets of London. Here and there, two persons gave life and variety to the recitation; while, in other instances, the whole weight of the piece was sustained by a single individual. One man was so constantly engaged in reciting the tract, that he seemed to have no other occupation. A respected friend of mine used often to joke me on this circumstance. "I have met with your friend Thomas Brown," he would say, "and I

really think that you ought to allow him a pension for his good services."

Once, when passing down Wilderness-row, I observed a man elevated on a chair, about to address the throng gathered round him. Curiosity led me, during a pause in the proceedings, to make my way almost up to the chair on which the orator stood, when, to my surprise and confusion, he suddenly broke out, in a loud voice, looking at me,

"Where have you been wandering about, Thomas Brown,
In your jacket so out of repair?"

I felt as much "taken to" as if I had been called to account, as the identical Thomas Brown in the Dialogue. There stood the elevated orator, proud of the numbers collected to hear him; and there stood Old Humphrey, hemmed in by the people, fancying that the throng were looking at him, and almost as much ashamed as if he had been detected in inadvertently passing a bad shilling. It was really no easy matter to get out of the magic circle, the charmed ring that encompassed him.

My readers may laugh at the circumstance of my having public minstrels to chant aloud my doggerel productions, an advantage that the poet

laureat cannot boast; and truly often have I laughed at the circumstance myself. The bards of other days were highly favoured:

Time was, ere Modred peal'd the song resounding,
Ere yet Cadwalla's muse outstretch'd her wings,
That poets pour'd their lays on palfreys bounding,
And bards were canopied in courts of kings.

But such times are over now: and, therefore, notwithstanding his high poetic fame, as the author of "Thomas Brown," Old Humphrey is neither likely as a bard to bestride a prancing palfrey, nor to be accommodated with apartments in Buckingham-palace.

The tract, on which I have said so much, has afforded pleasure to thousands; what amount of profit it has imparted is only known to Him who knoweth all things. It may be self-love that whispers in my ear the soothing conviction, that some of my readers will value it none the less when they know that it fell from the pen of Old Humphrey. Such as it is, it will be influencing the thoughts, the words, and the deeds of many, when its author is no more. How truly may it be said, that from a small seed a great harvest of good or evil may arise! Well may we be cautious of what we write or speak. Evil words may be as thorns in many sides, while words "fitly spoken are as apples of gold in pictures (or baskets) of silver."

While round us hours and years unceasing roll,
A word may warp, or warn, or win a soul.

Thus have I given, in a plain and intelligible form, the origin and history of the tract called "Thomas Brown." My own opinion respecting tracts is this, and I think experience will bear out the remark, that, however desirable it may be to attract the attention of readers, either by peculiar poetry, or striking prose ; however great may be the advantages of interesting anecdotes and sprightliness of style, it has pleased God to make those tracts the most useful, which are embued with the simplest and purest truth, and which have been written with the fullest dependence on the influences of the Holy Spirit. Aware as I am that the observation is, as a winged arrow, aimed at my own heart and my own productions, yet cannot I withhold the honest conviction of my mind, that those tracts have been most eminent in extending man's good which have most eminently sought to promote God's glory.

If, as the author of "Thomas Brown," I cannot congratulate myself on the talent I have displayed, let me take comfort in believing that the tract has been kindly received. As already stated, I have aforetime been ashamed of the work ; but neither Old Humphrey, nor yet the archbishop of Canterbury, need be ashamed, in

putting into the head and the heart of a poor man either the thoughts or the words of the concluding verses :

"For myself, as becomes a poor, weak, sinful man,
I will pray for support from on high,
To walk in God's ways, my Saviour to praise,
And to trust in his grace till I die !

"And though poor and unwise in the ways of the world,
I believe in the truth of God's word,
That true riches are they, which will not pass away,
And true wisdom, the fear of the Lord !"

ON BEING PUT BY.

I AM not aware that the subject of being “put by” has been handled before, though very likely it may have been. To conclude that a thing is not in existence merely because we have not met with it, is unwise. I will, therefore, rather try to persuade myself that, even though the subject may not be so new as I suppose, I may yet succeed in attaching to it some novel remarks. It is certainly a subject entitled to attention. Dismiss then, if you can, other considerations a while from your mind, and accompany me in my observations.

In this changing world mutability is written upon all things. The beast of the field perishes, and “man that is born of a woman is of few days.” Youth, in process of time, becomes age, health is changed to sickness, strength declines into weakness, and life gives place to death. As it is with the body, so it is with the mind; its energies are abated, its attainments become neglected, and wisdom itself is often succeeded by second childishness.

But though we all “do fade as a leaf,” and

“spend our years as a tale that is told;” though life is “even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away;” and though the general sentence has been passed on every one, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return;” yet it is not this general and universal decay that I allude to, when I speak of being “put by,” but rather to those sudden visitations of weakness, sickness, infirmity, or accident, that oftentimes arrest a man in the very noontide of his strength and usefulness. An hour ago, while busied with my books and papers, this subject suddenly came upon me, and set me talking to myself. The following may be considered as a fair account of what passed in my mind :

“Hark ye, Humphrey ! Here are you sitting in your study, as you are wont to do, hale and well, dipping your pen into your inkstand, and addressing your readers with a consciousness of standing well with them. Here are you, persuaded, by the kind expressions of your friends and by the flattering suggestions of your own heart, that you are doing some little good in the world ; whether you are or not is perhaps more questionable than you suppose ; but let that pass, and honestly answer this question—Has the liability of your being put by ever been fairly and fully anticipated by you ?”

“Put by ! Why, we must all be put by. We

cannot expect to live for ever. Life is short, death is certain. Every one knows that, some time or other, he must of necessity be put by."

"Very true; but you are not, by a general reply, to get rid of a particular inquiry. You have not been asked anything about every one; whether every one knows, or does not know, that he must be put by, is not the question. The inquiry is, Has the liability of *your* being put by ever been fairly and fully anticipated by you?"

"I must certainly have thought about it, because——"

"Because what?"

"Because all people think, now and then, of their latter end; they cannot help it. The most thoughtless people in the world have their moments of reflection."

"But you were not questioned about what all people think, or whether they can help it or not. You were plainly asked whether the liability of *your* being put by had ever been fairly and fully anticipated by *you*?"

"To confess the truth, I hardly think it has."

"Well, then, it is high time that it should be; and you may just as well reflect a little upon the matter now. You have lived in the world many years, and if ever any man had reason to praise God on an instrument of ten strings, you have,

for mercy and goodness have followed you all the days of your life. If, then, unexpectedly, your powers should fail, or mischief should befall you by the way, so that you could no longer do as you have done, or as you do now, should you submit, think you, without a murmur, or should you indulge in a spirit of repining? Would the language of your heart be, ‘Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness;—when I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil?’ Job xxix. 2—6. Or would it be, ‘I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me?’ Psa. cxix. 75. ‘Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?’ ” Job ii. 10.

“It is hard to say how any of us would act if suddenly placed in a position of unexpected trial, but it is my desire to be prepared for every earthly calamity.”

“No doubt it is; but as there are thousands who desire to die in peace, who, nevertheless, make no preparation for eternity, so Old Humphrey may desire to act patiently and acquiescingly if put by, without duly considering his liability to such a visitation.”

“ Well, I admit that this matter is fairly stated, and honestly set before me, and I hereby promise to give the subject my best consideration.”

And now, having made you acquainted with what has passed through my mind with regard to the possibility and liability of being put by, let us now pursue the subject together, for it applies to you as well as it does to me. You may be put by as well as myself. How many have been called unexpectedly from the world! How many have been suddenly put by in the midst of plans and performances that occupied the whole of their waking hours! As the needle points to the north, so these occurrences point to us, and had they speech their language would be—

Of present thoughtlessness beware!

For future hours, prepare! prepare!

Among the many points of preparation, there are three which strike me as very necessary. A lively remembrance of past mercies, including thankfulness of heart that we have *not* been put by. An attempt so to arrange our plans and performances, that we, and all around us, may be as little inconvenienced as possible, *should* we be put by. And, lastly, habitual sympathy for, and respect and attention to, such as *are* put by. Bear these points in mind, and I will endeavour to bear them in mind also.

It must needs be a heavy trial to such as act in prominent situations of importance and usefulness, to be, as it were, shorn at once of their powers, and to quit the sphere of their exertions. Do we then feel and manifest for such that sympathy and attention which, if put by, we should desire to receive? In this respect I feel rather strong; how is it with you?

I carry my sympathy in such things even to the brute creation, and never see a bullock loosed from the yoke through an accident, nor a coach-horse unharnessed through exhaustion while running his weary stage, without feeling kindly towards the poor brute, and saying to myself, "There is one who has done his duty; he deserves attention." If, then, I feel this towards the lowlier creatures of creation that labour for the benefit of man, hardly can it be otherwise than that strong feelings of respect and affection should gather round my heart when I see a human being, whose best energies have been employed and exhausted in promoting man's good and God's glory, withdrawn either by age, sickness, or infirmity, from the stage on which he has played his part. If I know myself in such a case, my heart does feel enlarged towards him, my sympathies are drawn out in his favour, and I do hold him in high estimation. Again I say, How is it with you? How

beautifully the word of God guides us in our dealings with one another ! “ As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise,” Luke vi. 31.

This subject of being put by is really one that should be often entertained by us, and we should regard it in a favourable as well as in an unfavourable light ; for how often in God’s providence, as well as in his creation, does sunshine break forth from behind a cloud ! We may be put by to try our passive graces. Oh, how hard it is to be quiet ; to look on and see God do his own work without us, when we think that we could render much aid ! Difficult as this duty is, it may be required of us. There is much that is heart-lifting in saying, “ Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord,” 2 Kings x. 16 ; and much that is spirit-humbling in communing with our own hearts and being still : “ Be still, and know that I am God,” Psa. xlv. 10. A Christian man should be ready, in God’s hands, to be somebody or nobody ; to go up higher, or to take the lowest seat ; to build the temple, or to hew wood and draw water. I hear you say, “ This is fine talking, Mr. Humphrey, but do you practise what you preach ? ” To which I reply, “ You ought to practise it whether I do or not. My infirmities are no warrant for your neglect of duty.”

Once more ; we may be put by for a time, that we may, afterward, be restored with renewed powers, bringing forth, like a field that has lain fallow, fifty and an hundred fold. As an unbent bow launches with fresh vigour the winged arrow to its mark, so may we, after affliction, strengthened by the Strong, and made wise by a heavenly Instructor, become mighty in our thoughts, our words, and our deeds.

Try if you cannot make more of this subject than I have done ; and that you may do so, call to your remembrance the three points already mentioned by me ;—a lively remembrance of past mercies, including thankfulness of heart that you have *not* been put by ;—an attempt so to arrange your plans and performances, that you and all around you may be as little inconvenienced as possible, *should* you be put by ;—and, lastly, habitual sympathy for, and respect and attention to, such as *are* put by.

Of present thoughtlessness beware !
For future hours, prepare ! prepare !

THE MAN IN THE FUSTIAN JACKET.

Do you know, reader, what the sunshine of the heart is, when the sky looks so blue, so bright, and so beautiful, that you cannot choose but climb up above it with your thoughts and desires, that you may be the nearer the throne of the Eternal, to pour forth for unnumbered mercies your thankfulness and praise? A half-hour of such sunshine is enough to make us patiently endure a half year of dreariness and gloom. I am now in a cheerful mood, and will therefore relate to you my uncle's account of the man in the fustian jacket. Oh! how I loved to hear him tell the tale! Again and again did he repeat the story, and always with as much life and spirit as if he had never told it before. You shall have it, as near as I can remember it, in his own words :

“It is an excellent thing for a man to be diligent in what he undertakes. If business is to answer, it must be attended to. If a plan is to succeed, it must be followed up with spirit.

You shall have an instance of this. I will tell you of the man in the fustian jacket.

“Soon after I came to live in this house, as I was painting the palisades of my little garden to the front, a man in a fustian jacket stopped at the gate. ‘You have a pretty little garden here, sir,’ said he, ‘and it looks all the better for the fresh paint on the palisades. I live just round the corner, and if you should ever want colours of any kind, I should be happy to supply you. I have ivory-black, drop-black, blue-black, and lamp-black; very good browns, purple, Spanish, and Vandyke, and though I say it, nobody has better blues, ochres, and umbers. Those who deal with me say I am famous for my gamboge, king’s-yellow, and chrome-yellow; and as for vermilion, both English and Chinese, white lead and flake-white, Brunswick-green, emerald-green, and mineral-green, there is none better than mine to be had.’

“No sooner had I told him that no colour of any kind was wanted by me, than he thanked me civilly, again spoke of my pretty garden, and went on. ‘I wish,’ thought I, rather hastily, ‘that he would keep his gamboge, king’s-yellow, and his vermilion to himself—what do I want with his colours?’

“The very next morning, as I stood in my little garden, again came by the man in the fustian

jacket, carrying a large jar. ‘How nice and fresh the shower that fell in the night has made your garden, sir,’ said he; ‘I am taking a jar of my neat’s-foot oil to one of your neighbours. If anything in the oil way should at any time be wanted, linseed or boiled, common train, seal, sperm, or Florence in flasks, I shall be happy to serve you; I live only just round the corner.’

“ ‘What does the man mean?’ said I to myself, when he was gone, ‘pestering me with his linseed and boiled oil. I want none of it. I am not to be compelled against my will, I suppose, to buy his greasy oils. Why cannot the man keep quiet?’

“ ‘Rather warm, sir,’ said the man in the fustian jacket, as he paused for a moment, on passing by in the middle of the same day. ‘Rather warm, sir! Not exactly the day for hot joints, but better suited for cold meat and pickles. I am running with a pot of pickles to the house with the green blinds yonder. If you are fond of pickles, sir, my capers and cucumbers would just suit you; but I have all sorts—olives, both French and Spanish; onions, gherkins, walnuts, French beans, cabbage, capsicums, and cauliflower. I live rather handy for you, sir—only three doors round the corner.’

“ ‘Yes, thought I, ‘you live handy enough to torment me! One would think it would be quite time enough to tell me all about your capers and your cucumbers, your capsicums and your cauliflowers, when I ask you; but that will be some time first, I promise you. I begin to be sadly out of temper.’

“On the evening of the same day, just as I was entering in at my garden gate, once more went by the man in the fustian jacket. ‘Almost time to light up, sir,’ said he; ‘I somehow forgot, when I was out with my basket this morning, to leave four pounds of mould at one of my customer’s, and so I am taking them now. If you should want candles of any kind, sir, you will find my store dips, fine wax, spermaceti, cocoa-nut, composite, and metallic wicks, excellent. Perhaps, sir, you will give me a trial some day; for I am, as I may say, a sort of neighbour of yours, my shop being only just round the corner.’

“Hardly could I keep my temper while he was talking to me, but when he was gone I gave way sadly. ‘He will be a daily plague to me,’ said I, ‘and I wish that I had never come into the neighbourhood, or that he and his tallow candles were a hundred miles off.’

“I was pulling up a weed or two on the following day in my little garden, as Betty came out

to the door with her broom to sweep the steps, and at the same instant I heard the voice of the man in the fustian jacket who, as usual, was on his way to take some article or other to his customers. ‘You deserve a garden, sir,’ said he, ‘for you keep it so nice and tidy. Your girl, there, knows how to handle a broom, I see. I sell brooms, sir, and brushes of all kinds; best shoe brushes in sets, scrubbing brushes, stove, furniture, tooth, clothes, and hat brushes, as well as thrum mops, and hemp and wool mats. I supply everything in the kitchen way: housemaid’s gloves, black-lead, servant’s friend, bees’-wax, turpentine, scouring paper, emery, fuller’s-earth, whiting, pipeclay, paste in pots, hearthstones, knife-bricks, mason’s dust, firewood, and matches; I think I told you, sir, that I live just round the corner?’

“‘Yes, you did tell me,’ thought I, ‘and I have a great mind to tell you something. Hardly can I stir out into my front garden without being annoyed with a long catalogue of oils, pickles, candles, and kitchen articles; but of one thing I am determined, that neither oil, pickle, candle, nor kitchen article, from your shop, shall ever come into my house.’

“From that time not a single day passed without my seeing, and hearing too, the man in the

fustian jacket. He seemed not only always ready to catch me in my garden, but always ready to take advantage of any little circumstance that occurred. At one time, coming up as Betty brought in a fish, he thought it a very fine one, and told me that he kept the best of fish sauces, and, indeed, sauces of all kinds, anchovy, Burgess' essence, catchup, mushroom, walnut, Indian soy, and currie powder; as well as all kinds of spices, nutmegs, cinnamon, pimento, cloves, ginger, mace; peppers, both black, cayenne, Chili, long, and white. At another time, when I had hung up my canary in the front, there he stood by the gate, calling it a pretty creature, and telling me that he sold bird-seeds of every sort, and bird's sand. On a third occasion, he overtook me just as I stepped across to the post-office with a letter. 'We are both on the same errand, sir,' said he, 'for I have a letter to put in the office myself. It was directed by my son. See, sir, what a beautiful hand he writes!' and then he failed not to tell me that he sold writing-paper, good ink, sealing-wax and wafers, and excellent black-lead pencils, not forgetting to remind me, as before, that his shop was no distance from my house, being only just round the corner. In short, morning, noon, and night, when at home in my garden, or walking abroad, I never seemed secure from having the man

in the fustian jacket at my elbow. Again and again he enumerated the articles he sold, and again he informed me that he lived just round the corner.

“Man is a changeable creature, and in many respects it is well that he is so, for if all his angry feelings and unjust opinions were to remain ever the same, he would be more unlovely than he now is. In my anger I thought unjustly of the man in the fustian jacket, but, in a little time, my anger passed away, for he turned out to be an honest, industrious, kind-hearted, and benevolent man. True is it that he pursued his business with more ardour than tradesmen usually do, but then he was attentive, punctual, and as upright in executing his orders as he was active in obtaining them. His perseverance prevailed; I tried him, made inquiries about him, liked him, and at last so heartily respected him, that, from that time to this, all the colours, oil, pickles, candles, kitchen articles, sauces, spices, bird-seed, writing paper, ink, sealing-wax, wafers, and black-lead pencils that I have required, have been bought of him, nor have I ever once regretted the circumstance of his shop being only three doors round the corner.

“Now why,” continued my uncle, “cannot we be as much in earnest in holy things, as the

man in the fustian jacket is in his business? Here he is awake when we are asleep; he is moving while we are sitting still; he is busy while we are idle. He sets us an example that we might follow with advantage.

“Go where he will, the man in the fustian jacket makes it known that he is a tradesman; but go where we will, we too much hide our profession as Christians. He acts as if he thought highly of his trade; we almost as though we were ashamed of our religion. He tells all he meets of the articles he sells, and we tell hardly any one of the truths we believe. If we talked of our Bibles as much as he does of his goods, and were half as anxious to spread abroad the gospel of Jesus Christ as he is to extend his business, it would be to our credit, and greatly to our advantage.

Much have I learned from the man in the fustian jacket, for he continually wins his way by perseverance. What he does in temporal things, we should do in eternal things; what he does to advance his welfare on earth, we ought to do to secure our happiness in heaven.

“Think of the little value of his articles, and the exceeding great value of the truths of the gospel! Surely if he prizes his possessions, we ought to prize ours a hundredfold more. To know, sinners as we are, the way,

and the only way, to salvation through Jesus Christ, who died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, is to know that which is beyond all price; the more inexcusable then are we, when we fail to value it ourselves, or to make known its value to others.

“Truly, ‘the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light,’ but this ought not so to be. While we are ‘not slothful in business,’ we should be ‘fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.’

“Forget not what I have said,” continued my uncle, “for it applies, perhaps, as much to you as it does to myself. Should you get any good by it, it will do me good to know it. In the meantime, should you stand in need of any of the articles mentioned by me in the oil and colour way, I hope you will buy them of my neighbour, the man in the fustian jacket, whose shop from my house, as I dare say you remember, is only three doors round the corner.”

ON RISING AND SETTING SUNS.

THERE are some subjects that seem, of necessity, to call up joyous emotions; and there are others which are equally influential in awakening solemn considerations. The subject of Rising and Setting Suns is calculated to do both; let us see, then, if we cannot turn it to advantage.

It is quite as much as I can do, not to envy those who reside in rural situations, or among mountainous scenery; for there is so much that excites me to joy and thankfulness in such positions, that, when in the country, I live in a state of mind something akin to that of a schoolboy, enjoying half-a-day's holiday. It may be that the schoolboy's pleasure and mine are both heightened by the same conviction—the shortness of the tenure on which we hold them. Certain it is that, among exciting scenery, I am no little of an enthusiast.

Some time ago, I was abroad as early as two or three hours after midnight; but the immediate object of my shadowy ramble needs not now to be told. I had kept, “ever and anon,” my eye on

the east, from the gloom of night to the grey of approaching dawn. By-and-by came a pale, silvery light, that faintly spread itself in the shadowy vault, succeeded by a somewhat rosy tint. It seemed as though angels were busy in unbarring the windows of heaven! And now, wider and wider, shot upwards a glowing beam, while clouds of yellow hue, azure, purple, and crimson, adorned the skies: but even these were but the heralds of greater glory; for, at last, came, in unendurable splendour, the source of light, the fountain of effulgency. I felt excited and solemnized by the presence of the ambassador of the Eternal, as he flung from his resplendent car light and life, and proclaimed to earth and heaven the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of his Almighty Maker!

It is well for man that he has duties to perform, as well as pleasures to enjoy; otherwise he might be wasting his energies in unprofitable enjoyment, or dreaming away his days in listless ease. Our daily duties narrow the fountain of our delight, and make it play the higher. I had active duties to perform through the day, and in their discharge I forgot the pleasure that the rising sun had given me. When filled with occupation, time flies quickly. Hour after hour passed away, and I set off on my return home.

The day was well-nigh spent, though the west was still flooded with light. Above the round, red sun, which might just be looked on without the eyes being blinded, the sky was almost as bright as the sun itself; while below, the dark, purple clouds afforded a fine relief to the golden orb that rested on and glittered above them. More remote, the attendant clouds were faint and scattered, as though overawed by the glory that beamed upon them, or fearful to intrude on retiring majesty. By degrees, the king of day sank down in his chariot of gathered clouds, and, hiding his face with his purple robe, withdrew himself from the world. Nature was sensible of his absence; heaven and earth put on sackcloth, and creation mourned the monarch of the skies.

I have now given you a rising and a setting sun, such as you may have seen more frequently than myself, and, perhaps, you may not be strangers to that delightful excitement which an ardent love of nature, combined with a deep and solemn reverence for its Almighty Creator, is calculated to inspire. But it may be otherwise, for all are not moved in the same manner, nor by the same things. Indeed, among the numberless paradoxes that puzzle the head of Old Humphrey, this is not the least—that so many who highly value

God's book of revelation, should lowly estimate his book of creation ; that thousands who ponder a text of Holy Scripture with delight, should regard with apathy the rising and setting suns of the Eternal !

But is there no other sun than that which shines in the heavens ? The royal psalmist says, "The Lord God is a sun," *Psa. lxxxiv. 11* ; and, indeed, he is a sun, compared with which the glittering luminary of the skies is as clouds and darkness ! But I am disposed, just now, to regard lesser things, from which we derive especial advantage, and of which we may be suddenly deprived, by their being taken from us, or by our being removed from them ; I am disposed, I say, for a passing moment, to regard such things as rising and setting suns. The thought may be fanciful, but it may possibly be made both pleasurable and practically useful.

A new year is a rising sun ; it will be a setting sun by-and-by. Regard it as His gift who in the beginning created heaven and earth, called light into being, and rolled the stars along the firmament above. Receive it as the gift of God to you, and turn it to account. Look at its seasons, its sunshines, and its sabbaths ! its green leaves, its flowers, and its fruits ! its facilities for glorifying your heavenly Father, and its opportunities

for doing good ! Regard its moments, its minutes, and its months as a part of time, nay, rather, as a part of eternity, and that part which, to you, may be the most important. Estimate it highly, receive it gratefully, and improve it gladly, so that God's gifts may set forth God's glory.

Books and periodicals may, in a sense, be regarded as rising and setting suns. Some of these fling a radiance around them, and shine with a steady light ; while others, sadly beclouded, begin to set almost as soon as they have risen. A well-conducted periodical is an influential thing, giving new life and energy to the circle in which it moves. Do you profit by periodicals ? Do they inform your head, correct your heart, and help you on your way to heaven ?

In my younger days, a publication appeared under the name of "The Comet," and, being pleased with the first number, I sent a contribution to the work. Soon after this, I was surprised to see placarded on the public walls an announcement of "The Comet's" second appearance, in which the title of my contribution figured away in large letters as the most attractive part of the placard. Writers are not apt to set too low a value on their productions, nor do I think it likely that I fell into this error. The editor of the periodical, however,

went beyond me in the estimation of the paper of his unknown correspondent. My vanity being excited, I again set to work, and wrote a sparkling piece, well calculated, in my own opinion, to add to the lustre of "The Comet." With some impatience, I awaited the day of publication; but, alas! alas! ere that day arrived, "The Comet"-office was closed! The blazing star had disappeared! The sun had set! and my sparkling, meteor-contribution was never made visible to the public eye. More important publications than "The Comet" have been suddenly withdrawn from their sphere. Are you turning to account, then, those that you are accustomed to read?

But while I make these remarks, rising and setting suns seem to multiply around me. What suns are well managed, benevolent institutions, whether they seek the welfare of the soul or of the body;—whether they mature the seeds of piety, humanity, and virtue, or destroy those of infidelity, cruelty, and crime. There is in them a reviving principle. They call forth a renewed energy of thought, word, and deed. They drive away the dark shadows of despondency, and doubt, and difficulty, and spread around the beams of hope, determination, and success. If there be aught in the heart of man planted there by his Almighty Maker, of hallowed purpose or

benevolent design ; aught of reverence for the Great Giver of good, or of love for mankind ; these institutions are calculated to mature it, and to make it bring forth fifty and a hundred-fold.

Faithful ministers of the Most High, humble-minded, yet ardent proclaimers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, are all suns, shining with more or less intensity. Not always do they beam forth with power, scattering the mists of ignorance and unbelief. Not always do they enlighten the dark places of the earth, making the desert to rejoice, and the wilderness to blossom as the rose, for He, from whom they derive their influence, in his wisdom limits their power ; yet is it a fearful thing for these suns to be withdrawn. “It is usually,” says one, “a sign of displeasure, when a sovereign recalls his ambassador.” Do we value these lights of the earth, and do we profit by their emanations ?

Show me a man whose heart and soul are animated with the desire to do good ; and whether he is seeking to instruct the young, to correct the vicious, to inform the ignorant, to relieve the destitute, to heal the sick, to liberate the slave, to extend the comfort of the suffering sons and daughters of affliction, or to protect the lower creatures of creation from cruelty, I will regard him as a sun ; I will rejoice at the radiance of

his course, and mourn when he is shorn of his beams.

Authors are suns in the sphere in which they move ; and though, you may say, some of them give but little light, others there are who fling a radiant beam on the paths of thousands, and whose lustre will continue to shine when they are withdrawn from the world. Oh ! how I yearn, at times, to grasp and press the influential hand that has quickened my pulse, and made my heart feel too big for my bosom. And think not that I allude only to those who treat on holy things, for I am an excursive reader, and often revel in the flowery realms of imagination and poetry. Very kindly do I feel towards such as contribute to the hoard of human happiness by their lively fancies, and free-hearted, though ephemeral works of genius ; but remembering how many resplendent risings and sorrowful settings we have had among these glittering suns of literature, I can hardly be out of order in mingling with the kindly emotions I entertain for them, the ardent desire that, while they have the wit to sparkle through time, they may have the wisdom to prepare themselves and their readers for eternity.

Artists, too, have a claim on my regard, for I owe them the amount of many a beaming hour. If you know what it is to be carried away by the

pencil of the painter, the chisel of the sculptor, and the pointed tool of the engraver; if you have marvelled at the skill that could give life and animation to canvass, impart all but breath and motion to marble, and extend vitality to dots and lines on paper, you will not quarrel with me for putting painters and sculptors, and engravers among my rising and setting suns, nor for feeling interested in their prosperous course.

Have I said enough on the subject of rising and setting suns? or shall I give you another page or two of my wandering thoughts? Hardly do I think it advisable to proceed; for if my fancies afford no pleasure, the sooner they are brought to an end the better; and if, on the other hand, you enjoy them as a feast, it is an excellent thing to rise from an entertainment with an appetite. Whichever the case may be, have a care, whether I have been trifling or not, that you do not trifle with yourselves. The viper has a fang in his head, and the scorpion has a sting in his tail. I hope that no sting will be found either in the head or tail of my remarks, but I do wish the close of them to be influential. Whatever may be your years, the sun of life will soon set with you—improve your advantages. “Make haste! make haste!” said the aged New Zealander, when he

wished missionaries to be sent to him, "for my sun is fast going down."

Yes, Christian reader, whether thou art young, middle-aged, or old, thy sun is fast going down, and therefore I again say to thee, improve thine advantages! Let the present year be an especial period in thy life for good. Make the most of its rising and setting suns, and of all the gifts of thy heavenly Father. Seek, with redoubled ardour, the Sun of righteousness, and keep ever in view that fast-approaching eternal world, in which "the sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory," Isa. lx. 19.

ON GETTING BACK AGAIN.

HARK! the clock is striking. Let me, then, at once enter on my undertaking, and see if I cannot say something about "Getting back again" that will be listened to with attention, and retained with profit. Many a half-hour have I wasted; let me turn the present one to some good account.

Many are the days that have rolled over my head, since the time when I first went squirrel-hunting with my companions. We were all of us very young, and it was about as likely that we should catch squirrels by chasing them from tree to tree, as it was that we should catch birds by putting salt on their tails: however, squirrel-hunting we went. It would ill become me to boast of our success; if we did not bring any squirrels away with us, we did a much better thing, we left them behind us, leaping from bough to bough, enjoying the liberty their Maker had given them. I hold it no light affair now, wantonly to rob God's creatures of their birthright, and had rather see one nimble-footed, happy-hearted tree-climber

at freedom in his native woods, than fifty running round their wiry prisons.

When we came to the great wood where we expected to catch squirrels in abundance, being strangers to the place, we asked a countryman if it was easy to find our way into the wood? "Easy! ay," said he, "nothing easier in the world than to find your way into a wood; the only difficulty is to find your way out again. To get forwards will cost you little trouble, but I question if it will not cost you a great deal to get back again." The countryman was right, and before we did get back, we all had quite enough of squirrel-hunting.

But have there been no other adventures beside squirrel-hunting, in which having engaged, I would willingly have retraced my steps? Has there been no inconsiderate act committed, no rash course pursued by me, that has wrung my heart-strings? The mariner who too ardently ventures on the deep, when a storm hangs threateningly in the sky, should his anchors be lost, his sails be torn, and his masts be carried away by the board, sighs for the friendly port he has left. And the aerial voyager, who has recklessly soared to the skies, with but little knowledge of his balloon, when he finds himself nearing the sea, or discovers that his gas is rapidly escaping through some rent in the

silken globe above him, yearns once more to set his foot safely on the firm earth he has so rashly quitted ; but never yet did any voyager of the billowy sea, or azure skies, yearn more intensely for a place of safety, than I have yearned to get back again to the point that I have abandoned. What would I give, or rather what would I not give, to recover some of my stumbling steps ; to retrace some of my wrong turnings ; to get back again to the point whence I started, and thereby relieve my heart from much bitterness and sorrow !

How does this matter affect you ? Have you always held on your way, rightly pursuing a right object ; never getting into “ by-path meadows,” nor turning aside a moment from the turnpike-road, the King’s highway to the celestial city ? But why do I ask such a question ? “ There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not,” Eccles. vii. 20. You doubtless, also, have shadowy remembrances, corner cobwebs in the chambers of your hearts, which, as Christian people, have given you disquietude ; then will you both understand me, and go fully and freely with me, in my present observations.

When our parents fell, and when Cain cried out in his agony, “ My punishment is greater than I can bear,” how bitterly they must have repented the past, and how earnestly they must have desired

to get back again to their former state ! But there was none to help them ; they had sinned, and they must of necessity sorrow also.

Pharaoh was greatly troubled in the midst of all his chariots and horsemen, when the waters of the Red Sea came upon him ; and willingly would he have given the land of Egypt as his ransom to have got back again : but that was quite out of the question.

Balaam, the son of Beor, “ the man whose eyes were open,” supplies me with another illustration. “ And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned ; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me : now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again,” Num. xxii. 34. Ay, Balaam ! Balaam ! there are very many of thy mind who are ready enough to go back, when going forward has led them into difficulty.

How gladly would Hezekiah have got back again, if he could have done so, after he had foolishly showed his silver and his gold, his precious ointment, his armour, and his treasures, to the messengers of Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon ! But no ! the deed was done, and it could not be undone. Half his kingdom—nay, the whole of it, would not have enabled him to retrace his steps ; he had gone

forwards foolishly, and he could not get back again.

What would not David have done to have blotted out the past, and get back again, when he said, "I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me?" Psa. li. 3. Or Haman, when he led the king's horse, while Mordecai the Jew sat thereon, habited in the king's apparel, and wearing the king's crown? Or, still more, when he was about to be executed on his own gallows? There can hardly be two opinions about the sincerity of David and Haman in their desire to get back again.

What a burst of heart-affecting eloquence broke from the lips of Job, when his soul was wrung with anguish, and he wished to get back again to where he was before! "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me; when I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil.—But now they that are younger than I have me in derision; whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock," Job xxix. and xxx.

When Judas “repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.” And when Peter “remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice ;” and “went out, and wept bitterly.” They would have given their all to have got back again. Alas ! the one had betrayed, and the other had denied his Master ; and they might just as easily have scaled the battlements of heaven, as have blotted out their sins.

I could abundantly multiply my scriptural illustrations, but it is hardly necessary ; for they have already been numerous enough to show that some of the best, and some of the worst characters of the world have had equal reason to lament their forwardness, and the utter impossibility of retracing the steps they had taken.

Yet think not that these remarks on getting back again are to be limited to things that have been done ; it is not so much the past that I have in view, as the future. Whatever mistakes have been made, whatever errors may have been committed, to weep over them in a faint-hearted, despairing spirit, is neither the way to remove, nor to mitigate them. My object is to prevent the evil consequences of an error. I place in a

strong point of view the difficulty of getting back again, to deter you from going recklessly forward.

When a duty is before us, we ought neither to get back, nor even to look back. The wife of Lot, when she looked back, "became a pillar of salt," Gen. xix. 26. And it is said in the ninth chapter of Luke, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven." But there is a great difference between getting back to the path of duty, and turning back from it. So long as we are walking in a right way, we ought not to fear the consequences; better is it to lose life in a good cause, than a limb in a bad one. Go forward then, boldly, when your duty is before you. Get back again, as fast as you can, when it is behind you.

When we think how often a momentary act embitters a long life, it behoves us to pause before such an act is committed. The poor lad who runs away from his home to roam the sea as a sailor, has the heart-ache for years; but that heart-ache does not enable him to get back again to the home he so rashly left. No! no! The raging of the winds, and the roaring of the waters, are the only reply to his repentance and his tears; and the man who by a sudden act of folly wounds his conscience, or injures his reputation, is in much

the same situation. Even though he would part with his right arm, or his right eye, to get back again, he cannot do it. The horse-hair shirt of the self-tormented devotee may be more endurable than his daily and nightly remorse, yet still his sorrow must be borne ; what he has done, he has done for ever.

By this time I hope you begin to see that this subject of mine is capable of universal application, and that it befits us all to ask ourselves the question more frequently than we do in our undertakings and actions, Should this turn out to be a false step, shall I be able to get back again ?

What an especial mercy it is, that, though in a thousand lesser things we cannot get back again, we may in the most important of all things. Yes ! far as you may have gone astray from God, you may through his grace return, and then, " though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," Isa. i. 18. However wide you may have wandered, there is a way open by which you may get back again to the favour of your heavenly Father.

I am not speaking peace, where peace ought not to be spoken ; I am not robbing a single denunciation of the Almighty of its terrors, nor attempting to soften down the Divine threatenings

against sin, but simply giving utterance to a plainly expressed and glorious truth, that Christ came into the world "to seek and to save that which was lost," and that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 15. The promises in the word of God are the property of a contrite sinner, who applies to the Saviour. If the promises of God are not for penitent sinners seeking mercy, for whom were they given? "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," 2 Cor. v. 19; and, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," 1 Tim. i. 15. And the Redeemer saith, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37. May the God of grace cause this conviction to sink into every soul.

You have now something before you to think of, and I am not without hope that some of my present remarks will remain in your memory; so that, whether you go into a wood, squirrel-hunting, or enter on more important undertakings, you will be circumspect enough honestly to put the question, Am I quite sure that, if I desire it, I can get back again?

ON THE EXERCISE OF PRUDENCE.

YOU may never have devoted half an hour to the consideration of prudence, for the subject has somewhat of an unwelcome aspect to many readers. It is to a man, a little like what a "good boy's book" is to a child,—he expects from it nothing that is attractive and joyous, and apprehends from it every thing which is forbidding and grave. But though this may seem to be the character of the subject of prudence, yet may we so muse upon it as to be well repaid for the brief season devoted to its consideration.

One of the rarest things in the world is prudence. Riches may be gained, learning acquired, reputation won, and all of them be possessed together, without prudence. The wise man says, "I wisdom dwell with prudence," Prov. viii. 12; and no wonder, for what wisdom would do without prudence I cannot tell. You may find two witty men, ten clever men, and twenty foolish men, before you will find one prudent man. But though, as I said, prudence is one of the rarest

things in the world, and I might have added, also, one of the most valuable, yet is it by many estimated very lightly. This is much to be lamented; for even truth, with her open brow—zeal, with her glowing heart—love, with her melting eyes—and kindness, with her ever-helping hands, would form but an unhappy household without prudence.

As few know the value of money better than those who are slenderly provided with it, so, on the same principle, I may not be unqualified to discourse on prudence. Without laying claim to a great amount of it myself, I may yet successfully recommend prudence to my neighbours.

Without prudence the human character is as a house built without mortar; its elements of strength and durability are not cemented together, and are not, therefore, for a moment to be relied on. As the imprudent boy outruns the butterfly he pursues, or crushes it in his eager grasp, so does the imprudent man fail to realize the ends of his desires. Give him a hundred good qualities, the want of prudence will neutralize them all. He may have industry to obtain, frugality to amass, zeal to pursue, swiftness to overtake, courage to attack, and strength and skill to overcome, and yet his imprudence may rob him of his prize. One throw of the dice

sometimes ruins the successful gamester, and one act of imprudence on the part of youth or maturity, not unfrequently overclouds a fair prospect for ever.

Having thus, as it were, by my remarks, placed prudence on a pedestal to attract particular attention, let me now proceed, in a more familiar manner, to show how frequently the exercise of prudence is disregarded. If my memory did not fail me, I should find myself at little loss for illustrations, even from my own conduct, but as it is, that course need not be adopted.

In many cases what we call prudence is of a very doubtful character; for as we judge of it by its success alone, so is it equally liable to be approved and condemned. When a man on an excursion wraps himself up in a great coat, and takes with him a large umbrella, if the day proves stormy, and heavy rains descend, he is regarded as one possessing much forethought, discretion, and prudence; but should the day turn out to be very fair and sunny, the same person is laughed at for his over care and unnecessary precaution. If, travelling on an unknown road, our companion boldly takes the path across the fields, and thereby saves us a mile of our distance, he becomes in our opinion a man of penetration and prudence; but woe betide him, if, by adopting this course, he

gets boggled among cross roads, and subjects us to an hour's unnecessary toil, for then we call him rash and imprudent. Perhaps one-half of the instances in which men get credit for prudence, are of this doubtful kind.

It may be, reader, that you pass for a very prudent character; if that be the case, it will not hurt you to consider whether there is not some truth in the remark, that, in common estimation,

Success metes out the praise of human deeds,
And he most prudent is, who best succeeds.

There is a great deal of this sort of judgment in the world. The schoolboy, who in wandering out of bounds picked up his master's watch, obtained a reward; but had he lost anything belonging to his master, under the same circumstances, he might have been caned for his disobedience in trespassing beyond the precincts of his play-ground.

We are not likely to hear of a prudent man setting a house in a flame, by playing with fireworks, nor of being carried out to sea by the tide, through thoughtlessly entering a boat on the shore, nor of ruining himself by reckless speculations, nor of greatly annoying another, to obtain a trifling advantage himself. These are

not the actions of the prudent, but of the inconsiderate.

A prudent course is a course of order, of peace, and of comfort, not only to ourselves but to all connected with us ; and well would it be for us if we could invariably pursue a prudent course in every relation of life—"never beginning that of which we had not well considered the end," and "always letting the conduct of to-day be such as to bear the reflection of to-morrow." On the unstable and imprudent there is no dependence to be placed, but the "prudent man looketh well to his going," Prov. xiv. 15.

How excellent is the lesson set forth to the imprudent man, in the fourteenth chapter of St. Luke : "Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he hath sufficient to finish it? lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish." How it may be with you I know not ; but for myself, I have begun many a tower in my time, that made very little progress afterwards, though at first I meant it to attain a lofty height.

An intemperate schemer, whom I knew in my younger days, once offered to lend me a thousand

pounds, if I wanted it, in a month, but in the meantime he borrowed from me a shilling. Now had I calculated on the proffered thousand pounds of so unstable a character, I must have lacked prudence even yet more than he did. He was one of the many who look not before them; whereas "the wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way," Prov. xiv. 8.

I was once present at the reading of a report which, though drawn up with great ability, sadly wanted prudence. It contained many personal and bitter remarks, and much matter which had nothing to do with the subject on hand; but when it was proposed to blot out the extraneous matter, it was laid down as a rule by several persons, not a very prudent rule certainly, that every part objected to in the report should be tried by this single question, "Is it true?" And if that question could be answered in the affirmative, then the disputed point should stand. Let me here show the extreme absurdity of such a course. I will put my supposed case in a strong light, that it may exhibit more conspicuously the folly I would reprove.

Suppose a committee, appointed to consider the expediency of erecting a hospital in a populous neighbourhood, are met together to draw up a report of their deliberations, they lay down the

rule that every questionable point of the report shall be tried by this inquiry, and by no other, "Is it true?" A comical member among them, having sense enough to see the absurdity of the rule, and being desirous to make others see it too, proposes that the report shall begin with a description of the room in which they are assembled, its length, breadth, and height, together with an account of the chairs, tables, and pictures it contains. One of the party objects to this information, as altogether unnecessary, but the cynic insists on the rule being observed. The question is put, "Is it true?" which being answered affirmatively, a full description of the room is introduced into the report.

Our cynic next suggests that it may be as well to introduce some account of themselves, such as a brief statement of their birth, parentage, and education. This suggestion is strenuously resisted, as a course that would subject them to derision; but the resistance is in vain; the rule is appealed to, and the statements having passed the ordeal of the inquiry, become also part of the report.

By this time, several of the members, supporters of the rule, begin to entertain a doubt of its wisdom; but our cynic allows them no quarter, for he proceeds to propose that a list of the kings who have governed our happy island shall form

part of the report. Some laugh at him, some are angry with him, and some almost question his being in his right mind ; but neither their doubt, their anger, nor their laughter, prevents him from appealing to the rule, or from carrying his point in the report.

The affair now assumes so discreditable an appearance, that every one wishes to escape from it ; when our cynical member, as the crowning act of his policy, proposes lastly, the insertion of an acknowledgment, on the part of the committee, that they are heartily ashamed of the ridiculous attitude in which they have placed themselves, in drawing up so extraordinary a report. This is so obvious a fact, that it cannot be denied, and the committee, unable any longer to sustain their indefensible position, give themselves up to the guidance of him who has convinced them of their error. He tells them that, even in recording truth, prudence is necessary, and gives them this better rule to assist them in drawing up their statement. Let every point introduced be not only a truth, but also a truth fit and proper to be introduced into the report.

It becomes, you see, an important inquiry to us, whether the principles we lay down for the regulation of our conduct are what they ought to be, and whether we carry them out in a proper

manner. Oh for the constant desire to give "glory to God in the highest," and to cultivate "peace and goodwill towards men," doing to them as we would they should do unto us.

But if the exercise of prudence be necessary in common affairs, how much more so in holy things! And yet by many pious people, prudence is regarded merely as a time-serving principle of expediency, forgetful of the injunction, "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Numberless are the errors of truly religious people owing to their lack of prudence and discretion. We ought not to undervalue hearing, because God has given us eyesight, nor the sense of taste because he has mercifully endowed us with that of feeling. If this be true, then, neither ought we to despise prudence on account of our possessing piety.

Prudence is not only a restrainer of evil and an adorer of good conduct, but, also, a helper in the great and the little affairs of life. A prudent man will attain his ends with small means, when an imprudent man will not effect them with large resources. Churlish Nabal would hardly have done that with five hundred men which his prudent wife Abigail accomplished with her loaves and cakes, her raisins, her parched corn, and her wine.

I once heard of two boys who wanted to pass a furious dog who was chained to his kennel.

One of them, to effect his purpose, thoughtlessly armed himself with a stout stick, which he held out in a menacing manner; but this only rendered the fierce creature more furious than before, so that the boy durst not approach him through fear of being torn to pieces. The other boy, somewhat more prudent than his companion, so pacified the enraged animal by throwing him pieces of the bread and butter he was eating, that in a little time the dog was seen wagging his tail, while the good-natured boy patted his head in perfect safety. Can we learn nothing from this little adventure? I think we may, for to me it seems somewhat akin to that text in the Proverbs of Solomon, "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger."

Suppose, in a peaceable and well-regulated neighbourhood, there lives one who is a cheat, a drunkard, a wrangler, and a sabbath-breaker, keeping open his shop on a Sunday, and setting his neighbours at open defiance. Now send to him a well-meaning man, hot-headed, hot-hearted, and possessing no prudence, and he will begin, perhaps, to tell him at once that his conduct is shameful, that he is a disgrace to the neighbourhood, and that such an ill-behaved man deserves to be set in the stocks, if not to be put

in the pillory for his pains. The consequence of this course would probably be, that instead of this imprudent person effecting any good, he would be kicked out of the habitation of the sabbath-breaker; while, had a prudent-spirited Christian undertaken the same mission, a very different effect would have followed. Zeal in holy things is an estimable quality, but without prudence it will lead its possessor into sad predicaments.

Think not that I am dealing altogether in suppositions. Too many instances have I known of imprudence among otherwise worthy people, not to have frequently regretted that the want of one quality should have so materially diminished their usefulness. A Christian man should be an attractive, and not a forbidding character. He should be forbearing, and not severe; he should be considerate, and not hasty. Prudence and piety are a lovely pair—a pity it is that they should ever be divided.

But if I have known some Christian people lamentably deficient in prudence, others have I known who largely possessed it. It corrected their errors, guided their zeal, increased their usefulness, imparted consistency to their course, richly adorned their lives, and made them models

of humility and of ardent devotion to the Redeemer.

Are you prudent, reader, at home and abroad? among friends and strangers? among religious and irreligious people? Are you prudent in worldly affairs, as well as in using the means of grace, and encouraging the hope of glory? Is your trust solely and unreservedly in Him in whom whosoever trusteth shall never be confounded? We should deem him an imprudent man who erected his house so close to the river that every flood inundated his habitation; or began to build it on the sand of the sea shore, where the coming tide would be sure to wash it away. How much more imprudent he must be, then, who builds not his house, but his eternal hope, on any foundation less substantial than the Rock of ages. To be imprudent for time is bad enough, but unspeakably worse to be imprudent for eternity.

It is very possible, having said so much on the subject of prudence and imprudence, that some of my readers will set me down as a very prudent old gentleman. Alas! alas! a purse of very little value may contain a great deal of gold, and he who can repeat all the proverbs of Solomon, may not be remarkable for reducing them to practice. I am not over solicitous that you should trouble

yourselves to ascertain the exact extent of my prudence; better leave it to me, and then you will be the more at liberty to estimate the amount of your own. There is nothing like every one attending to his own affairs; let us try, then, seeking assistance from above, to be prudent in all things.

JOHN STRONG, THE BOASTER.

It is by no means a good plan for any one who wishes to do good to others, to be always dinging-donging them with good advice. You never yet met with a man who was not shunned rather than sought, and hated rather than beloved, who continually occupied himself in nothing but censure, correction, or admonition. There is a proper time and place for everything. An interesting tale will oftentimes impress the mind more profitably, than a very severe, though very eloquent exhortation. This being the case, listen to my narrative of John Strong, the Boaster.

“Now wha dare meddle wi’ me?” said John Strong, repeating a line of an old ballad, as he sat on his own chair, in a saucy attitude, with a jug before him. “Wha dare meddle wi’ me?” said he, half in jest, half in earnest, talking to his companion and admirer, William Wallis, the tailor.

“Why, a man would look twice at you before he handled you or tried to talk you down,” said Wallis. “You are strong in name and strong in

nature, John. At all events, I am not the man to meddle with you in the way of quarrelling."

"I fancy not, William; you are too fond of sound bones to cross one of my sort," said John, saucily; "but make no mocks at my name; I will not allow it, Mr. Billy Button, and so I tell you."

"No offence, no offence, John; I meant no mischief," said the tailor, taking no notice of the nick-name John had just given him; for he well knew the quarrelsome nature of the man with whom he was talking. It was, as they say, a word and a blow with Strong; and one of John's blows, as the tailor knew very well, was no light matter.

"Well, well, take another glass of ale, William, and do not talk so fast. One cannot put in a word edgeways where you are," said John, who always treated those he liked with the best in his house; and that was the reason why the tailor went often to see him, and bore with his snubbings and saucy ways.

William Wallis was a stooping, mean sort of fellow, after all, and would have agreed with any one, if they had given him good eating and drinking while they talked to him. He was a fine-weather friend, who would have forsaken his comrades on a rainy day, and turned his back on old

acquaintance when they were poor and down-hearted. Frankness and upright dealing are a credit to a man; but he to whom the "bread of deceit is sweet, his mouth shall be filled with gravel."

"You cannot call me an old man, William," said John; "look at my arm! Is it like the arm of an old man? I shall be forty next June, and I say a man at forty is in his prime." "To be sure he is," answered the wheedling William.

"The miller's man, you know, who is but five and twenty, called me an old fellow, and said I must not think to crow over youngsters as I had done."

"He! he! he! so he did," said William, affecting to giggle, "but it might have been a manslaughter business, if his friends had not taken him away; you did pummel him handsomely."

"Wife! Mary! I say, bestir yourself a little, and bring us the pork-pie out of the pantry," shouted John, in great good humour; "Mr. Wallis may like to eat a bit of something with his beer. He shall make me a coat at Midsummer, for there is not a better tailor in the parish, and I say it, whose word stands for something, for folks dare not contradict me!"

Strong's wife, a mild, good-tempered, healthy-looking woman, spread a white cloth upon a table

and placed plates, knives and forks, and a large pork-pie before the wheelwright and the tailor, and John went on with his boasting while William was occupied in eating.

“The miller had a narrow escape, as you say, Mr. Wallis. Old, indeed! He will not call me old again in a hurry. I have stopped his chattering, for he knows what to expect if he crosses me. Then there was Phips, the wrestler, he challenged me last Whitsuntide at the club, but when we met at Simpson’s green, did not I give him a fair back fall for all his tricks and trippings? Why the man was not himself again for the whole day.”

“I have heard say that you did,” said the tailor, thoughtlessly, eating heartily at the pork-pie, which took up his attention so much, that for a moment he quite forgot to try to please the wheelwright.

“Heard say! do you doubt it?” shouted Strong, in a rage. “What do you mean by ‘heard say,’ master William?”

The tailor turned pale, put away his knife and fork, and tried to soften down the wheelwright. “I mean,” said he, “that I did not see it done, because you know I was not on the spot, Mr. Strong; but as for doubting it, that would be foolish indeed, when the whole parish knows that you flung the wrestler.”

“And I shall be after flinging you too, if I have any more of your ‘heard says,’ master tailor,” said Strong, threateningly; “but, however, as you do not doubt the matter, there is no harm done. There is not a man in the parish that dare meddle with me. Look at that mastiff, master William,” said Strong, pointing to a large dog that came just then into the kitchen; “folks say Towzer’s fierce and surly, and, to be sure, he has bitten a few folks that teased him; now, some have threatened to shoot that dog; some say they will poison him, or cleave his head: but let them touch a hair of him, only let them do it; I shall like to see them, that is all. ‘Love me, love my dog,’ you know. I can take care of Towzer.”

“To be sure you can,” said the coaxing tailor; “no one will touch Towzer when you are in sight; they know better than to get into trouble for the sake of a dog.”

“For the sake of a dog!” said Strong. “What do you mean by that, master tailor? The dog is worth his weight in gold. Do not speak slightly of my dog, for I shall not allow it.”

“Well, it is a fine animal, to be sure,” said William, “but I do not know much about dogs, Mr. Strong.”

“No; you know more about geese than dogs, master tailor,” replied Strong; “but still you may

believe me when I say that 'Towzer is worth his weight in gold."

"No doubt of it," said the tailor, again taking up his knife and fork, and cutting a fresh piece from the pork-pie.

"Well, well, you are a sensible man," said Strong, "taking you altogether, though foolish at times; and we think alike on most things. Now, where will you find a working man's cottage so well stocked as mine, Mr. William? Look at that Bible with the tea-caddy on it, why it is as big as a church Bible, and cost me a pretty penny; but my wife had set her heart upon having it. Look at the two sides of bacon over our heads, dangling from the ceiling; and did you ever see a finer ham than that hanging in the corner? Our cellar's small, but there are two good barrels of ale in it, and there is a leg of mutton and a round of beef in the pantry, where that pork-pie came from, master tailor."

"I always said," replied William, talking with his mouth filled with pie-crust, "I always said, that those would never starve that lived with Mr. Strong."

"I should think not," said the wheelwright, "for when that bacon is gone I can hang up more."

"To be sure you can, and fill your barrels

again when empty," said the tailor, drinking a glass of ale off at a draught.

"To be sure I can," said Strong, vauntingly, "and help to empty them ; for I can drink down any man in the parish, and get up neither sick nor sorry, to do a good day's work next morning."

A proud, boasting fellow was Strong, the wheelwright, as the reader has been told. He possessed great strength, he had a comfortable cottage, and he obtained a great deal of money for a working man, and these things were his pride. He trusted in his strength as though he thought it would never fail him, and was puffed up with his gains, little thinking that money makes itself wings, and that health and strength often suddenly pass away. Foolish man ! money may be ours to-day, and belong to others to-morrow ; it may be stolen : we may lose it, or be wronged out of it. If, then, our pleasures lie in having money, it may be taken away in an unlooked-for hour ; for no one can be sure of keeping his money. And as for health and strength, which are worth more to us than money, we may lose them in a day, ay, in a moment ! It ought to be the language of every heart, " Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is ; that I may know how frail I am. Behold,

thou hast made my days as an handbreadth ; and mine age is as nothing before thee : verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity," Psa. xxxix. 4, 5.

John Strong, puffed up with pride, continued to go on in the same way for a time, disliked by most people in the village, and only friendly with those who agreed with him for what they could get from him, like fawning William, the tailor : but a cloud was coming over him.

Strong was not one of those who harden themselves against God, but he was carried away by the foolish pride of a vain-glorious heart. He took credit for his health and strength, as if they depended on himself. Though he received those gifts from God, he gave not God the glory.

How many are there in the world who, hour after hour, and year after year, partake of unnumbered mercies, altogether regardless of the Almighty hand that bestowed them ! How many are there who make a boast of what ought to fill their hearts with thankfulness, and their mouths with praise. Oh that men would humble themselves, and give God the glory ! " Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men ! " Ps. cvii. 8.

John Strong had health, but health could not

protect him from accident. John Strong had strength, but strength could not defend him from broken bones. He was called on to take off the wheel of a heavily laden cart, but the instrument called the "jack," with which he had lifted up the body of the cart, suddenly slipped, and down came the cart upon the unhappy wheelwright. His thigh was broken, and besides this, he was otherwise injured: maimed, and in sad agony, he was carried into his cottage.

Stout-hearted John Strong struggled hard against low spirits, even when made to possess days and nights of weariness and pain. Agony, restlessness, and impatience quickened his pulse, and fevered his tongue, till his great strength gave way, and he became weak as an infant.

While lying helpless on his bed, one day, he heard some one running up the stairs, and his wife burst into the room, holding her apron up to her eyes, and sobbing as though her heart would break.

"What is the matter, Mary?" said the wheelwright. "Tell me, I say, directly, who has crossed you?"

"O John, John!" said the weeping woman, "there is Towzer lying dead in the lane. They have cleaved his head. It is the black-heartedness of the man that vexes me. The wheedling fellow

always had the best in our house when he looked in."

"Who has done it? Was it the miller's man?" shouted John, giving way to sudden passion. "Was it the wrestler I threw at Simpson's green? Was it——"

"It was William Wallis, the tailor," said the sobbing woman. "The dog had hold of one of his children's clothes, and would not loose; so Wallis struck him on the head with a hammer."

"Did you tell him how I would serve him out for it?" cried Strong.

"Yes, John, I did," answered his wife, "and the saucy fellow laughed in my face, and said you were crippled for life, and could never hurt him."

"We will see about that," said John, for a moment forgetting his afflictions. "My clothes, Mary! my clothes!" and he sat upright in bed, but directly fell back again through weakness. The wheelwright's proud heart then gave a groan. He had kept up till then, but Wallis's behaviour struck him down; he turned his aching head on his pillow, and cried like a child. It was the first time Mary, who loved her husband with all his faults, had seen tears in his eyes, and the sight cut her to the heart. "Never mind the tailor," said she, "I wish I had not told you, John; I

was foolish in speaking about it till you had got strong again."

"You did right to tell me, Mary," said John, mildly. "Do not keep things from me, and use me like a baby; I will not stand it. Now, leave me in quiet a bit, and then I can think about the matter."

Mary left the room directly, for John was one who would not be crossed. When alone, he tossed and rolled about on his pillow, muttering bitter threats against ungrateful William Wallis, and thinking how he would serve him when he got upon his legs. But the wheelwright's passion did not last long. He grew quieter, and began to think he might, perhaps, grow worse, and never leave his chamber till they carried him away in his coffin.

"Look at my arm, Mary!" said John Strong one day to his wife, as he lay on his sick bed, half wasted away. "Would any one believe that this stick of an arm ever mastered the miller's man, and grappled with Phips the wrestler, laying him fairly on his back? No, that they would not. I am but the shadow of what I was." What John Strong said was true enough; but his proud, boasting spirit was to be brought down too. His heart was to be humbled, as well as his frame wasted. "I think, Mary, that I shall die; but I am not fit to die."

Sometimes it pleases God to take a man and shake him with the terrors of eternity, so that he cries out aloud, in the bitter agony of his soul for the rocks to hide him, and the mountains to cover him from the wrath of the Almighty; and sometimes he allows the gracious promises of his holy word to descend gently as the dews of heaven on his heart, so that by degrees his soul is led to magnify the Lord, and his spirit to rejoice in God his Saviour. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost are enjoyed by him, without having to pass through those fears that many endure. It was in a gentle way, by little and little, that John Strong was brought to be an altered man.

A working man in health, who has a pork-pie, a leg of mutton, a round of beef, a ham, two sides of bacon, and two barrels of ale in his house, may feel independent; but in sickness, with these comforts gone, and with no gains, he is altogether in a different case. Like Samson of old, John was shorn of his strength, and found himself to be, indeed, as weak as another man.

There were a few Christian people, who, in John Strong's heavy affliction, took occasion to show him kindness. They now and then called in to know how he went on, and took him little

comforts and niceties, while some rendered him more substantial kindness, till, by degrees, they were regarded by John as friends. Then, too, followed in its turn, Christian conversation, till at last Mary, by her husband's desire, was seated at his bed-side with the big Bible in her lap. When Mary went for the Bible, she felt ashamed to find it so dusty. Willingly would she have read it every day from the first hour it came into the cottage, but her husband gave her no encouragement. The day ought not to pass without the word of God being read, by those who possess the treasure, in every habitation. Husbands and wives should attend to this, and help one another on the way to heaven. "Search the Scriptures," John v. 39; and, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom," Col. iii. 16.

John was always as proud of his big Bible as of his ale barrels; but the time drew near when he was to understand its value; to be taught by it that he was a sinner, and led by it to Him who died upon the cross, the only Saviour.

At first little more was done with the Bible than turning over the leaves and talking about the pictures; but better things were to follow. A verse or two, and then a chapter was read, and the soft voice of his wife Mary fell sweetly on the listening ears of John Strong, as she pronounced

the graven brow. There is that in the thin, straggling locks, the subdued features, and the quiet demeanour of old age hopefully looking onward and upward, which harmonizes with my spirit. No wonder then, that, having a full hour to spare, I turned my steps to the old church-porch.

I had walked, as a stranger, through the pleasant village, and loitered for some time in the churchyard among the tombs, gazing on the uncouthly sculptured stones, and reading their simple inscriptions, when, turning towards a group of hillocks by themselves, one of which was unturfed and unbrired, I observed an old man, with a strip of black crape round his hat, sitting alone in the porch. The declining sun shone upon him as he sat bending forward, leaning on his stick, which he held with both his hands. In a little time I was seated beside him.

It was a lovely evening ; for not only were the green leaves shining on the trees, and the birds singing in the bush, but the pleasant breeze was abroad, and the snowy clouds in the blue sky, as well as the churchyard, the fields, and the distant hills, were lit up with sunshine. Some say that man, on his pilgrimage to a better world, has no time to muse on the natural creation ; but let them say what they will, where a holy influence

has led the eye and heart to regard earth and skies as the handywork of the Creator, a deeper reverence will be felt, and a warmer glow of thankfulness will be enjoyed. That old man, in the quiet musings of his mind, sitting as it were in the garden of death, seemed to drink in the beauty and calmness of the summer scene. There was no despondency on his brow, but hope and peace were there visibly portrayed. True are the words of the prophet, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee," Isa. xxvi. 3.

For more than fourscore summers, and as many winters, had that aged man lived in the village, rarely roaming a dozen miles from the place. He had whistled in the fields as a ploughboy in his childhood, guided the share through the soil in his youth, and ploughed and sowed, reaped and mowed, with a lusty arm, in his manhood, the broad acres which had been tilled by his fathers before him. From his discourse, I soon gathered that he had been one among the better class of cottagers, looked up to by those below him, and respected by those above him, and that then, in the latter end of his days, his trust being in Him whom to know is eternal life, he was looking "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

While we sat together in the porch, my gray-headed companion ran over the names of the several pastors who, in his time, had guided the village flock. Some of these ministers had removed to other benefices, and some had "fallen asleep." He had seen, in his day, the church once new-roofed, and the spire twice new-shingled. There were but three men in the neighbourhood who were older than he, and not one among them, like him, could walk about in the sunshine, and inhale the pleasant breeze. "There were," said he, "Gaffers and Gammers in my younger days, but such names are now seldom or never heard of."

He spoke of the monuments in the chancel of the church : some had been erected in the life time of his grandfather ; and that of the knight in chain armour lying on his back, with his two-handed sword beside him, was much older. He spoke also of the broad, flat, grey stones inlaid with brass, that were so much worn away by the foot, across which the shepherd and part of his flock frequently walked, and over which the little lambs of the Sunday schools were continually passing :

Marble shall moulder and decay,
And solid brass shall wear away ;
While God's eternal word secure
Mid rolling ages shall endure.

Many were the green hillocks and graven stones in the village churchyard, and not a few of those who were placed beneath them had been known to the aged cottager, who seemed to take a pleasure in relating what he knew about them, and on looking back on days—some joyous, and some sorrowful—which had long gone by. He told me of the old 'Squire who lived at the Hall, and of Madam Bloxham, who once inhabited the large house called the Rookery. She had considered the poor, and the Lord had delivered her in the time of trouble, strengthening her upon the bed of languishing, and making all her bed in her sickness. The 'Squire was lying in the vault with the marble tomb over it, at the north end of the church; and the dust of Madam Bloxham reposed beneath the plain monument near the belfry-door, surrounded by the iron palisades.

As the old cottager sat talking, his eyes were often turned to the group of graves clustered together, as though they belonged to the same family. One of these, as I said before, had neither brier nor green turf upon it. "Tell me," said I, "who are lying there." The manner of my aged companion, as he entered on his account, led me to suppose he had more than a common interest in his relation. I remained silent while he gave me the following story.

While we sat together in the porch, my gray-headed companion ran over the names of the several pastors who, in his time, had guided the village flock. Some of these ministers had removed to other benefices, and some had "fallen asleep." He had seen, in his day, the church once new-roofed, and the spire twice new-shingled. There were but three men in the neighbourhood who were older than he, and not one among them, like him, could walk about in the sunshine, and inhale the pleasant breeze. "There were," said he, "Gaffers and Gammers in my younger days, but such names are now seldom or never heard of."

He spoke of the monuments in the chancel of the church : some had been erected in the life time of his grandfather ; and that of the knight in chain armour lying on his back, with his two-handed sword beside him, was much older. He spoke also of the broad, flat, grey stones inlaid with brass, that were so much worn away by the foot, across which the shepherd and part of his flock frequently walked, and over which the little lambs of the Sunday schools were continually passing :

Marble shall moulder and decay,
And solid brass shall wear away ;
While God's eternal word secure
Mid rolling ages shall endure.

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“Those who lie there, as you seem to suppose, all sprang from the same stock, and I humbly and heartily trust that their names are all ‘written in the book of life.’ Abel Haycroft was an upright, hard-working man, fearing God, and acting a kind part to his neighbours. Such a man ought not to have had an enemy in the world; but he had one, and a bitter one too, who wronged him, forced him to go to law, and ruined him. When I say, ruined him, I mean, that he took from him his earthly property; for Abel had a heavenly inheritance, that no one could take away. It seemed a hard thing that he, who had owned land as a master, should be compelled to till it as a servant; but it was so, and Abel left the house on the farm to live in a cottage. Where the fear of God is, no one can be altogether unhappy. Abel repined not at the loss of his lands. ‘The Lord gave,’ said he, ‘and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’ Abel, after all, was a richer man than he who oppressed him; for, ‘Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right,’ Prov. xvi. 8.

“Abel Haycroft had three sons, Ambrose, Gideon, and Gregory. ‘The lads must work as I have done,’ said he; ‘but that will not hurt them, for the “sleep of a labouring man is sweet.”’

They have learned to read God's holy word, and I hope some of it is in their hearts.' Abel lies under the third hillock yonder; for the first, with the head-stone, is the resting-place of his father, and the second that of his uncle. He died as he had lived, a humble disciple of the Redeemer; and I can fancy, though I was but a lad when he left the world, that I now hear the minister giving out the text for his funeral sermon: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord,' Job i. 21.

"Ambrose, Gideon, and Gregory loved as brothers should love one another. 'How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!' While they were together they felt strong, for 'a threefold cord is not quickly broken;' but a time came when they were to part.

"A man, to our sorrow, came to the village who had been at sea, and he talked so glibly about gallant ships, and studding sails, and the white foam, and the green ocean, and ivory, and gold-dust, and sunny islands, and macaws, and cocoanuts, that the head of poor Ambrose was fairly turned, so that nothing would do but he must go to sea. To sea he went; and however it might be with the other matters, right little of the ivory and gold-dust came to his share. Of the sun,

poor fellow, he had enough ; for he came back, after living in India twenty years, with neither health nor wealth. It was well that his brother Gregory had stuck to the plough, and had got a little beforehand, for it enabled him to give Ambrose a home in the cottage of his father.

“Before Ambrose came home Gideon went abroad, for he had heard that, in the west, land was to be had for little or nothing. A labouring man was sure to prosper there, for food was cheap, and they had no taxes. Childhood is the proper time to blow bubbles, but some people are inclined to blow them all the days of their lives. Poor Gideon was one of this sort, but even he was tired of the sport at last. He had a log-house, with plenty of swampy land that he could not drain, and fir-trees that he could not fell. Hard was his struggle ; but, at last, the hot sun and the swampy fog were too much for him, the fever laid hold of him, and he came back to the land of his fathers poorer than he left it. Gregory opened his cottage-door wide to receive his broken-down brother ; and, to make a long story short, the three brothers dwelt together in affection and peace, and the blessing of God rested upon them.

“Whatever else we may forget, sir, it behoveth us never to forget God ; for his mercy is in the heavens, and his faithfulness reacheth unto the

clouds. The three brothers, as I said, dwelt together. They read God's holy word, bent together at the throne of grace, and would have continued to walk together to the house of God in company to their lives' end, had not the infirmities of Ambrose and Gideon gained upon them ; but their faith was strong in Him who lived and died for sinners, and they trusted in him. It is fifteen years come Christmas since Ambrose was carried to the grave, and his brothers, knowing that he had looked onwards to a glorious resurrection, were enabled to say, with submission to God's holy will, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.' "

Having thus spoken, the old man stood up, and walked gently to the hillock which had neither brier nor green turf. "And here lies Gideon," said he, his voice a little faltering, "for yesterday he was carried to the grave, the 'house appointed for all living ;' but he knew in whom he trusted. It becomes us all, sir, to be ready to depart, but especially such an old man as I am, for 'there is but a step between me and death.' 'All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.' Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!'" Numb. xxiii. 10.

“And what became of the remaining brother?” said I, feeling sure that he then stood before me. “What became of Gregory?” said I, as he lifted his broad-brimmed hat, with the crape round it from his hoary head, and bent to me, about to take his leave. “He remains,” said he, “an inhabitant in the village still, preparing for the future; for though he is yet able to hobble about the scenes of his childhood, and to sit at eventide in the old church porch, looking on the graves of his brothers, he well knows that his time is short. Many have been God’s unmerited mercies,” continued he, wiping away with his sleeve the tear that had risen in his eye, “and this is not the least of them, that, rejoicing in the hope set before him, he can still say, though health and strength have departed, ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’”

THE COBWEB IN THE CORNER.

I ONCE read an epitaph on a tombstone, which contained this striking expression : “ Oh that this mouldering stone may remind a sinner of the mercy that may be found in a Saviour ! ” and since then, often have I applied the same language to my pen that was there applied to the stone. In holy things, however, we must be content to take aim, and shoot, for God alone can direct the arrow to its mark. Who can tell but that what I have now to say to thee, reader, may tend to thy peace ?

In the days of my youth I once had to call at a very elegant mansion, where I was shown into a fair apartment, to wait till the lady of the house joined me. Never had I before seen a room so elegantly furnished. The walls, which were covered with a paper of the most tasteful description, had a few choice paintings hung upon them ; the costly carpet was delicately white, fit only for a satin slipper ; while the chair-bottoms had worked upon them such beautiful flowers on a white ground, as

made me afraid to sit upon them. I regarded the room with wonder, for, altogether, its walls, carpet, furniture, and pictures seemed to form a piece of perfection. On raising my eyes, however, to the ceiling, to examine the cornice, I saw, as if it were there to point a moral, a cobweb in the corner. How it came about that a spider could be suffered to weave her web in such a chamber is more than I can divine, though it might be that the extreme delicacy of the room was, after all, the cause. Had the apartment been less costly, a servant might have been allowed to enter it more frequently; but however this might be, there was the black web on the snowy white cornice. The lesson it afforded me could scarcely be made plainer; and I must have been dull indeed not to have understood it, for it said, as intelligibly as the web of a spider could say anything—we must not expect to be without annoyances. In the fairest earthly apartment there is a cobweb in the corner.

This lesson has very likely been impressed on your memory as deeply as on mine. Sometimes a trifling circumstance, and at other seasons an occurrence of importance, may bring it home to our hearts; and yet we go on, day after day, fondly persuading ourselves that when we have got rid of a certain trouble, and gained possession of a certain good that we desire, we shall be at ease.

No such thing! There ever was, there is, and there ever will be, a drop of gall in our honey-pot, a shadow in our most sunshiny path, and a cobweb in the corner.

A short time ago I attended a well-conducted wedding. The day was fine, the carriages arrived at the church with their company at proper time. The bride and bridegroom looked as a bride and bridegroom should look, and cheerfulness and solemnity were alike visible in the bridal group. I was about to say that all were appropriately dressed and decorated, with white kid gloves on their hands and bouquets in their bosoms; but no, there was one solitary exception to the general propriety. One of the party attended with a black crape hatband; and who was he that was thus so unbridally attired, casting a shadow where a gleam of sunshine would have been more in harmony with the occasion? Alas! it was Old Humphrey. Ay, and the inadvertence, or blunder, or whatever else it may be termed, cost him something too; for though he did all he could to hide his best beaver, bearing the symbol of sorrow, the thing was impossible. There he was, handing out the bride and bridegroom from their carriage, with a black crape hatband above his brows! The wedding was, as I before told you, a well-conducted wedding; but you see that for all this there was

a cobweb in the corner. Ay, and a cobweb there will ever be. It is the poet only that finds a paradise beneath the stars, and he only finds it in his own poesy. He rhymes of

Mossy banks of verdant green,
Where creeping thing was never seen;

but it suits him better to rhyme about them, than to point out the exact locality where they are to be found. Gratefully to enjoy, and patiently to endure, is better than to spend our lives under the delusion of ever being perfectly free from care. As the traveller, in an alpine country, sets his eyes on a higher hill than the one he has ascended, so do we set our hearts on a higher hope than the one we have realized. We are never thoroughly satisfied. Oh that we could at once set our hearts on heaven, for on earth there will ever be a cobweb in the corner.

Well would it be if the truth were more present to our recollection, that we never were, and that we never shall be, on this side heaven, perfectly happy. There will always be with us something present that we wish to be absent, or something absent that we desire to be present. If we want nothing else, we shall be sure to want durability, whereas mutability is written on all things.

There is, where every man has been,
So wayward is our will,
E'en in the most delightful scene,
A something wanting still :

And the wanting that, is the cobweb in the corner. It is better to be simple than aspiring in our desires ; it is better to be lowly than exalted in our expectations. As a kite in the air often has a broken string, or a tangled tail, so in our high-minded, sky-aspiring moods, something usually happens to bring us down to the common level of humanity. We cannot keep up in the atmosphere of our excited hopes.

For though, high for a season, we ride on the blast,
We are sure to come down to one level at last.

To be thankful for sunshine is very desirable, and not less so to be prepared for shadows—for come they will. Surely as night follows day, joy will be associated with sorrow. Some trouble, some anxiety, some vexation, we must have ; wherever we go, and wherever we stay, we shall assuredly find a cobweb in the corner.

Great and small have, and will have, their annoyances, all the world over. The monarch finds his people intractable ; the statesman is outwitted by a rival politician ; the victorious warrior is at last defeated ; the rich merchant loses his cargo ; the farmer has a blighted crop ; the land-

lord meets with a bad tenant, and the tenant with a harsh landlord; the beau at the ball has a wrong partner, and the belle bursts her satin slipper; the soldier gets a shattered arm, and the sailor a splintered leg; the master is insulted by his servants, and the servant is turned away by his master. In short, every one finds a cobweb in the corner.

The various changes of life should make us thoughtful. When all that has been esteemed great passeth away, we need not expect that which is little to remain long. Babylon, the great Babylon, is thrown down! The hundred gates of Thebes are gone! The glory of Jerusalem is departed! The mosque of Omar occupies the place of the temple of Solomon; the Parthenon is tottering; and the heroes of olden times, where are they? Time is writing ruin on the Pyramids, and the spider hath woven her web in the palaces of the Cæsars! Truly the lesson should be graven with a pen of iron on our hearts: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth," Col. iii. 2. Change is universal, weakness follows hard upon strength, sickness upon health, and death upon life. There are shadows everywhere, and in every place a cobweb in the corner.

The language of the Redeemer was not, "In

the world ye *may* have tribulation ;” but, “ In the world ye *shall* have tribulation.” Trouble is our inheritance, our property, our birthright. Ours it is, and we cannot do without it. “ Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward,” Job v. 7. Let us desire less, and try to deserve more ; endure patiently, as well as enjoy gratefully, and look upwards as well as around us ; setting our affection on things that are above, remembering, as I said before, that there ever was, there is, and there ever will be a drop of gall in our honey-pot, a shadow in our most sunshiny path, and a cobweb in the corner.

GOD'S MESSENGERS.

FOR the last hour or so I have been thinking of God's messengers. Our thoughts often appear to be carried away, as dry leaves fluttering from the bough, by every wind that blows; but for all this, they are sometimes turned to a useful end by the Father of mercies. How infinite is his wisdom! and then think of his almighty power. If it be put forth in thy favour, what shall harm thee? If it be directed against thee, who shall preserve thee from destruction?

It is not unlikely that the term God's messengers may have set you thinking of the angels employed by the Almighty. You see them go forth with lightning-like speed on their errands of mercy or judgment, and marvel at the wondrous celerity with which they perform His holy will who "sitteth upon the throne," now occupied in the weal and woe of mortal men, and now riding on the whirlwind and directing the storm. But no! In using the term God's messengers I have no intention to speak of angels as represented by painters or sculptors.

You are now, perhaps, supposing that I have taken for my subject those who minister in holy things,

The messengers of grace to guilty men ;

and have, in the eye of your fancy, bishops in lawn sleeves, rectors, and curates of parish churches, or ministers of other congregations, as the case may be, discharging the all-important duties of their several positions ;—still you are wrong in your conception. Highly as I estimate the ministerial office, ranking his calling above all others—who, truly moved by a heavenly influence, devotes his noblest energies to glorify the Redeemer, and to help his fellow-sinners on their way to heaven—yet have I no design, in my observations on God's messengers, to allude to those who publicly proclaim the gospel of peace.

The messengers of God are many, and they are also good and evil ; for all things are his messengers that go forth and accomplish his designs. Sometimes they are mighty as embattled monarchs, and terrible as an army with banners, while at other times they are mean and low :

They come not forth as conquerors,
Their hands no weapon bear ;
No falchions glitter on the thigh,
And their brows no laurel wear.

At one time, they are fearful to gaze on, for

they are messengers of destruction; at another, they are lovely in our eyes, as the messengers of peace. "How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things," Rom. x. 15. Now they go forth to a kingdom: "Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled," Isa. xviii. 2; and now their errand is only to one man: "I have a message from God unto thee," Judges iii. 20. When we regard the varied messengers of the Almighty, and the means whereby he accomplishes his designs, we see, indeed, that "his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts."

We cannot always see the messengers of God, for the acts of the Holy One are sometimes performed by viewless agents: "Let there be light: and there was light," Gen. i. 3. Sometimes they are but imperfectly discerned: "A spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" Job iv. 15—17. The agents of the Most High are not the less his accredited messengers, because they are but imperfectly discerned. The more we are accustomed to regard the affairs of the

world as under heavenly control ; and the more clearly we discern, in the things which affect them, the messengers of God, the more ready shall we be

To take the gold of life with life's alloy—
Patient to suffer ; grateful to enjoy.

Surely, while we believe that He who made the mammoth and the elephant made also the moth and the ant—while we acknowledge that

“ The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises,”

it ill becomes us not to discern the messengers of the Holy One. They ascend and descend in their heavenly errand : they go abroad to and fro in the earth ; they are about our path and our pillow ; nor is there a spot unvisited or uninfluenced by their presence. God is everywhere ; the mighty mountain and the minute sand on the sea-shore are equally his agents :

The passing clouds of heaven his will obey ;
And winds and waves—his messengers are they.

Weak and diminutive as is the coral insect, as a messenger of God, it goes forth to do the bidding of its great Creator, and extended islands are formed in the sea. The warring elements, decay and time, are messengers, also, of the Eternal, whether swiftly or slowly they execute his almighty mandates. “ The monument becomes a ruin. The battle of the elements, the withering

sweep of the lightning's fiery wing, with its accompanying death peal; the slow, snail-like march of unerring decay, leaving behind the traces of its progress; the yawn of the earthquake; these do their work. Upon the tangible works of man, his temples, palaces, pyramids, monuments, columns, the foot of time is placed, and will eventually crush them; stone blocks, thick-ribbed arches, roof and roof-tree, king-post, queen-post, beams, rafters, and all."

He who rules in the armies of heaven, and among the children of men, has mighty messengers, when he chooses to despatch them on errands of destruction. Plague, pestilence, and famine, battle and murder, and sudden death. These roam abroad in the world, and waste it, for the sins of its inhabitants; yet take courage, thou lowly follower of thy Lord, for "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.—Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation," Psa. xci. 4—6, 9.

God sometimes scourges the world with his

messengers the mildew and the caterpillar, and effectually do they execute their errand ; making the garden a waste ground, and the fruitful field a scene of desolation. When Pharaoh, the hard-hearted Egyptian king, and his armed host oppressed the people of God, what were the messengers of the Holy One ? Did he send the whirlwind to destroy them, or the earthquake to swallow them up ? No ! For he can clothe the weakest of his creatures with power sufficient to execute his commands. He had armies ready to obey him, for he is the Lord of hosts, and can control the wills and affections of sinful men. He could have sent the wild beasts of the earth on the mission of destruction ; but instead of this, diminutive and impotent creatures, such as the frog, the locust, and the fly, became the messengers of the Almighty to plague the stubborn heart of Pharaoh. Nor was it till these had done their work, that he sent thick darkness upon the Egyptians, and slew their firstborn, forcing even Pharaoh to rise up in haste by night and to cry unto Moses and Aaron, “Get you forth from among my people.”

Sometimes accidents, sometimes sickness, and sometimes human laws, become the messengers of our great Creator, in removing human beings from the world. We must not, however, nay,

we cannot, if we duly reflect, suppose that the greatest offenders have been those who have endured the heaviest punishments. Malefactors are not of necessity the worst of their species, they are only delinquents that happen to have been discovered. There is, I feel persuaded, a more fearful catalogue of crimes than that contained in the Newgate Calendar; and there have been more fearful offenders than the culprits who have perished on the scaffold and the gallows. Among those who have been honoured among men, and had marble monuments erected to their memory—among those who have lived in credit, and died in apparent peace, doubtless have been some of the blackest monsters that ever bore the image of humanity. Successful villany and practised hypocrisy may escape the quick-sighted vigilance of man, but they cannot escape the lightning glance of the all-seeing eye of God.

In reading the word of God, we can hardly fail to be struck by the many messengers sent from the Eternal throughout the whole of the Scripture history. I will mention a few of these as they occur to my memory. The ravens were messengers to Elijah, as the bears from the wood were to those who mocked Elisha. The ram caught in the thicket was a messenger for good to Abraham and Isaac, as the blast of the ram's

horn was a messenger of evil to the city of Jericho. Pleasant messengers were the cruse of oil and the barrel of meal to the widow of Zarephath. Poor Job was almost overwhelmed with messengers; for what with the Sabeans, and the fire from God, and the Chaldeans, and the great wind, and the plague of boils, and his injudicious friends, he had quite as much as he could patiently endure. The handwriting on the palace wall was an alarming messenger to Belshazzar; and the smooth stone of the brook from the sling of David was a very unwelcome one to the giant Goliath. Gehazi would not approve of the leprosy sent to him, but it was not on that account the less a messenger from God. The same remark may be made of the crowing of the cock, that smote the conscious heart of repentant Peter; and the light from heaven that blinded Saul. Those that I have enumerated should be regarded as the messengers of the Almighty, as much as the flood that drowned the world, and the Holy Scriptures of eternal truth, setting forth the way of salvation by Christ.

God has warning messengers, reminding messengers, consoling messengers, and encouraging messengers. The rainbow is his messenger of hope, and the sparkling stars are his messengers of faith, bidding us look upwards when the

world is wrapped in darkness. Many, too, are his messengers of joy. Look at spring, with its fresh buds ; summer, with its beauteous flowers ; and autumn, with its abundant fruits ! The fertilizing dew and the descending showers are kindly messengers, and so are the refreshing breezes that, morning and evening, breathe health around the land. What think you of sunshine, and the warbling of birds, and the hum of bees, and the waving of butterflies' wings ? These are messengers expressly commissioned to make the heart happy ; surely, then, we ought to be grateful.

Remember that I am reasoning with myself, as well as with you ; for it by no means follows that because I talk about the messengers of God, I am more apt in discerning them than you are. While a man has the credit of being as quick-sighted as a lynx, all the time he may be blind as a beetle.

Our hopes and fears are often heralds of mercy to us ; and oh ! what a messenger is the "still small voice," that reaches the deafest ear and the hardest heart ! Not more influential than this is the pealing thunder, that seems to rend both earth and heaven. This is a messenger that is irresistible. Dominion, and power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, oppose it in vain.

Compared with this the torrent of the river and the tide of the roaring ocean are weak and uninfluential. Has this messenger been sent to you? Has it broken in upon your privacy, when the doors and windows of your chambers have been closed, and when darkness has spread over you its shadowy wings? Has it told you that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God?" that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die?" and warned you to "flee from the wrath to come," and to hasten to the "fountain opened for all uncleanness?" In a word, has it told you that without faith in Him who died on the cross you have nothing to hope, and that with it you have nothing to fear?

You will see, by what I have said, that the pen of a ready writer might soon fill a book with a catalogue of only part of the messengers of God. Try if you cannot make out a much more extended list than that with which I have presented you.

ON HOBBY-HORSES.

WHAT darling pursuit, reader, are you following? What favourite hobby-horse are you riding? The mews, or menagerie of this wide world, is well supplied with all kinds of steeds ready saddled and bridled for those who choose to mount them. Most men ride a hobby at some period of their lives; as for myself, I have ridden many, and hardly has one among them been less than eighteen hands high. The whimsical caprices of mankind are numberless, and he who had time and inclination to select from them the most singular and striking, might present a paper to the public highly instructive and vastly entertaining.

The inclination to ride a hobby is confined to neither age, sex, nor situation. Young and old, men and women, princes and peasants, simpletons and sages, have all had their hobbies. The other day I noticed a child astride on his wooden horse, which he had ridden so desperately that it had neither head nor tail remaining. "Oh," thought I, "my little friend! you are not the only one,

by a great many, that I have known, who has ridden off the head and tail of his hobby.”

If every one who mounted a hobby was expert at horsemanship, we should not see such ridiculous spectacles as we now sometimes do ; but the misfortune of it is, that in hobby-riding we are the last persons to suspect our want of address and ability ; so that we may positively be the laughing-stock of those around us without imagining, for a moment, that we have had any hand in provoking their unaccountable mirth. Though he who has a black mark on his brow, or a white mark on his back, cannot see it, yet the rest of the world can ; and though the hobby-rider may be blind, his neighbour will have the eye of a lynx on his peculiarities.

Some men ride musical hobbies very varied in their character ; and hardly is a musical hobby-rider to be outdone, whether his forte lie in pouring forth in wild notes

The vile shrieking of the wry-necked fife,

or in directing the diapason of the thundering organ. In my youthful days I knew a most inveterate violin-player, whose boast was, that he would not play second fiddle to any man in the world. He was a fine performer, certainly, and well he might be, for report said that in his intem-

perate and sinful fervour, he sometimes played twelve hours a day on his violin for a week together, including the day of the Lord !

Hobby-riding amateur painters are by no means uncommon, though very many of them sadly over-rate their ability. So long as they confine themselves to talking about the Florentine, Roman, and Venetian schools, and are content with making the great master painters the subject of their conversation, they are secure ; but when once they take the brush in hand the case is otherwise. Lamentable productions have I gazed on in my time—productions which have made it very evident that a great love of painting, and a very little ability to paint, may exist together.

But neither the musical nor painting hobby-rider ever equalled the vagaries and the caprioles of the poetical one. Many write verses in abundance, and with facility, who seem to have no particle of poetry in their hearts or souls. I have known men of talent, judgment, and discrimination, fond of rhyming, and fond of appearing in print, who were never able to discern their utter inability to write poetry. While I make this remark, a poem of a very imposing kind, highly dedicated, and beautifully printed, is lying beside me. Its very subject must have excited curiosity among those who were well qualified to discern its

demerits at a glance ; and yet so unhappy is the production, that its author, though to my knowledge much elated with his performance, has real reason to hide his face with both his hands. Of all hobbies, let him who is unskilful avoid the Pegasus of poetry !

I remember passing the residence of a maiden lady of property, whose hobby was said to be that of keeping an extraordinary number of cats. These tabbies were regularly fed and furnished, petted and provided for, in the most costly and careful manner. Every arrangement was made as to bed and board for their comfort, and a regular course pursued of washing and combing, exercise and diversion, so that the health and happiness of this feline family appeared to be by far the most important object that occupied the lady's attention. It was even said that a cat-doctor was in occasional attendance ; and I can the more readily believe the report, when I recall to mind the circumstance, that a lady, who once lived near me, in the excess of her sympathy for an invalided tabby, had a chicken boiled for her benefit.

I know one whose hobby is his aviary ; and there he spends, perhaps, his happiest hours amid the twittering of small birds, the murmuring of doves, the cooing of fantail pigeons, the chattering of jays, the quacking of ducks, the gabbling

of geese; and the talking, calling, hooting, screaming, and shrieking of parrots, paroquets, macaws, and cockatoos. Often have I playfully wished him joy of his hobby, telling him that when his favourites join in full chorus, the discord of a butcher sharpening his cleaver on a grinding-stone is to me, in a musical point of view, greatly preferable.

Another whom I know rides a pyrotechnic hobby, and he is quite as hard a rider as he of the aviary. His delight is to be among fireworks and fire-arms. It seems to be quite necessary to his enjoyment that there should be something glittering, sparkling, and flashing before his eyes, and something hissing, cracking, and roaring in his ears. Not only has he pleasure in seeing and hearing fireworks, but he is also an adept in making them, being quite at home among gunpowder, touch-paper, fusees, squibs, crackers, wild-fire, Bengola-lights, golden rain, tourbillons, stars, katharine-wheels, rockets, and Roman candles. The wonder to me is that he has never been in the army, for in his case one might almost suppose that the danger of attacking or defending a beleaguered city would be counterbalanced by the beauty of a bombardment. What strange hobbies do men ride!

I have aforetime mentioned the hobby-horse of

Michael Holmes, but as it falls in suitably with my present subject, once more shall it be referred to. Many men have many minds, and had not Michael's disposition been different to that of most men, he would never have chosen so extraordinary a hobby as he did—Michael's hobby-horse was a big drum. Now, as a man can hardly go a-hunting without treading on his neighbour's produce, neither can a man play much on the big drum without trespassing on his neighbour's peace. Early and late, morning, noon, and night, houses, chimneys, roofs, rafters, walls, and windows were ringing with the loud reverberations of Holmes' big drum. It was a visitation that tried the patience, soured the temper, and called up the bad passions, of all the inhabitants around. I hope that you fully comprehend the annoyance that such a course must occasion in a neighbourhood, and fully sympathize with those who had to endure it; because, if you do, you will the more readily agree with me in the remark: we should endeavour always to keep in remembrance the fact, that there really are other people in the world besides ourselves, and that we should also let our hobby-horses, be whatever they may, take care that they trespass not on the peace of our neighbours.

You have come in contact, no doubt, with

autograph-hunters, some of whom ride their hobbies with such desperate energy that they will beg, borrow, or steal, the autograph of any remarkable person, without the slightest compunction. No name of celebrity for talent, oddity, wit, wisdom, whim, weakness, wilfulness, or wickedness, comes amiss to them; for they would prize as no common treasure, but rather highly estimate as a delightful *mélange* of precious gems, the signatures of Walter Scott, Grace Darling, and Bonaparte, Mungo Park and Mrs. Fry, king Charles and Oliver Cromwell, Daniel Lambert and the Living Skeleton, Alfred the Great and Tom Thumb the Little, Jack Sheppard the house-breaker, and Howard the philanthropist, the man Levy who leaped from the Monument, and the "Boy Jones," who three times won his way into Buckingham Palace. But think not, because I thus humorously speak of the lovers of autographs, that I think evil of them, or censure them for riding their hobby. It is only after such as are reckless that I send a flying arrow of good-tempered satire.

I have a somewhat vain, broad-breasted young friend, whose hobby is a showy waistcoat, and with this hobby he goes prancing about in all directions. This is a weakness, but he is not without his good qualities. Time has been when

I have regarded a new waistcoat of my own with no small degree of complacency ; and if now, in my age, I am more sober in my attire than formerly, it would scarcely become me to be very hard on my young friends for doing what I have done so long before them.

The musical, painting, and poetic propensities, the tabby-loving and aviary hobbies, with the pyrotechnic, autographic, and fine waistcoat inclinations, are but a very small part of the peculiarities existing among us. As I at first intimated, we are quick-sighted to the oddities of others, but blind as beetles to our own.

It becomes every reader to examine his heart and his ways in some such way as this :—Is my favourite pursuit consistent with the Christian character ? Is it a right improvement of the inestimable jewel, time ? Will it bear the scrutiny of the great day ? Oh let us ever remember that in the commonest duties we are to keep our Master and his honour in view, and whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, do all to the glory of God.

Though I have thus rapidly glanced at a few of the many hobby-horses that are favourites with different people, there is not an ill-natured thought in my head, nor an ill-natured feeling in my heart, towards any hobby-rider in the wide world, who

acts kindly to the lowlier creatures, and who neither willingly dishonours God, nor wantonly trespasses on mankind. We must correct one another in love ; shoot folly as it flies ; reprove error and cruelty, and put a brand on the brow of vice : but in doing even these things, our own defects should ever be before our eyes. Let us, then, showing meekness and kindness to all, “ consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works,” Heb. x. 24.

ON INCONSISTENCY.

HE who undertakes to treat on inconsistency may be said to have a full subject for his reflections. Turn where he will, and tarry where he may, he will be at no loss for illustrations: within doors and without, in spring, summer, autumn, and winter, they abound everywhere. Reader, into whatever follies thou mayest fall, and whatever may be thy inconsistencies, be not thou among those who, to obtain the trinkets of time, are willing to give up the treasures of eternity.

I have, I believe, aforetime dropped a word or two on consistency, but I do not remember having before taken inconsistency as a subject for my pen. Whether you know an inconsistent man or not, I do. I know one who practises pride, while he preaches humility; feels the influence of folly, when he talks of wisdom; loves this world, while he directs those around him to another; and treats, with his pen, on humanity, prudence, virtue, and piety, without sufficiently illustrating them by his own example.

It would be a long chapter that would contain

my own inconsistencies, leaving alone those of my neighbours; and be assured I am not at all disposed to attempt a catalogue of either one or the other. When farmer Brown or farmer Ball, as the case may be, has a hundred bags of red Lammas wheat to dispose of, he never thinks, not he, of ordering out his wagons to carry the whole to the neighbouring town, but, taking a handful of the grain, and tying it up in a small canvass bag, he puts it into his pocket, mounts his black mare, and trots off with it to market, where he expects to find a customer. The sample of grain answers all the purposes for sale that the hundred bags will effect, and then it is much easier to carry. Profiting by the course pursued by the honest farmer, I will content myself in showing you a few samples of human inconsistency.

It now and then happens that a farmer, mistaking the amount of grain in his granary, sells more than he possesses, and is unable to fulfil his contract. This is an awkward predicament to be placed in, but it is one in which I am not at all likely to be found. However large may be the demand for examples of inconsistency, I am in a position ready to meet it. In an eastern tale, wherein two owls are adjusting the dowry of ruined villages to be given on the approaching marriage of a son and daughter, one of the old

owls says of the war-loving sultan Mahmood, that so long as he lived they would never be in want of ruined villages ; and in like manner may I say, that so long as mankind are what they are, there will be but too many instances of inconsistency.

We are told that a shrewd pope, who had acted so inconsiderately and inconsistently as to make almost unlimited promises to his friends, was waited upon by them, with the petition that he would graciously vouchsafe them two harvests in a year ; when, not only was he pleased to grant the request, but also indulgently to allow them, for the future, to reckon twenty-four months to their year instead of twelve. It is not every one who can get rid of the bad effects of his inconsistencies so adroitly as this cunning pope did. As the best of all modes of treating a wild bull, is to keep out of his way, so the best of all plans to prevent inconsistencies from involving us in difficulty, is never to commit them.

There are some actions that are not so inconsistent as they seem to be. It must have been a fine sight to see the lame man who was healed by Peter and John at the gate called Beautiful, entering "with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God," Acts iii. 8. Some of you may think he acted inconsistently, and blame him for his unseemly leaping, when about to enter

the hallowed temple, but I am not a whit surprised at his lively movements. What would have been the use of reproving him? Why if they had tied the man's legs, they could not have kept his heart from dancing.

A thought occurs to me at the moment which I will just mention. No one is more sensible than I am of the advantage of having a few minutes to spare in the house of God before the services of the sanctuary begin; for, besides a tranquil preparation for prayer and praise, it affords us other benefits. After quietly seeking Divine assistance, oh, what kindly emotions, when we are in a right spirit, does one quiet glance around call up in our hearts! We think kindly and favourably of our fellow-worshippers. We look on the young as on youthful Samuels, and Timothys, and Lydias, whose hearts God has opened; on the middle-aged, as on those who are giving their strength and the prime of their days to holy things; and on the aged, as on fathers and mothers in Israel. We feel kindly towards all, from the pastor to the people in the furthest pew, and breathe the prayer, that we may not only worship together on earth, but also unite our voices in the hallelujahs of heaven. But seeing so clearly as I do the advantage of these few minutes, am I prompt and punctual in securing them? Ashamed should I

be to answer the question. What have you to say, reader, on this point? Do you feel strong or weak? Steady or wavering? Consistent or inconsistent? It may be well for us both to think over this subject.

If we could see our own inconsistencies as plainly as others see them, it would humble us in our own estimation. What should we think of one who, striving with all his energies to gain possession of a kingdom, should be found wasting his time in running after a butterfly? We should be struck with his inconsistency. But are we struck with our own? We either are, or ought to be, striving, and striving hard, too, for a kingdom. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," Matt. vi. 33. Yet, notwithstanding this, often are we found, with all our hearts and souls, pursuing the butterfly trifles of the world.

There is hardly a vice that we hate more, or censure more, than that of ingratitude. If we render kindness to one who lifts up his heel against us, we instantly take the alarm, and are ready indignantly to exclaim—

Freeze, freeze, thou winter sky!
Thou dost not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot;
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friends remember'd not.

And yet this burst of virtuous abhorrence, this disgust at the sin of ingratitude, proceeds from those who receive from the hands of their heavenly Father multitudes of unacknowledged mercies. Were our inconsistencies to assume shapes as monstrous as the ingratitude they manifest, we should regard them with astonishment and terror.

I must not pass over the inconsistency of Christian people presenting a rough, churlish, and forbidding exterior to those around them. "There are," it is said, "some men with whom we seem on the instant to get acquainted. An hour's accidental association in a stage-coach, a railroad carriage, a steam-packet, or an hotel, does more towards banishing reserve and restraint than many months of daily communication with beings less congenial. They seem to suit us: we part from them with regret; and long afterwards, when their names are forgotten, we remember our pleasant companions, and the happy hour we spent in their society. It is not then that friendship can be made; but we may learn from this the advantage of unpretending good-humour and frank benevolence." If this be true as applied to men, is it not especially so when applied to Christian men? There is hardly a greater inconsistency practised than that of a Christian—whose very breath should be love, and whose every act should manifest

kindness—"going about churlishly as a hog in armour, or playing the fretful porcupine," by setting up the bristly quills of unamiable and unlovely tempers. Oh! how I hate myself, or rather, how I hate my own inconsistency, when, forgetting the courtesy and forbearance that are due to all, I give way, outwardly or inwardly, to uncharitable feelings.

As it is said of Elymas the sorcerer, represented in one of the cartoons of Raphael as groping about, seeking some one to lead him by the hand, "that he is blind in his head, blind in his foot, and blind all over;" so should it be said of the Christian, that he is kind in his manner, kind in his matter, kind in his thoughts, kind in his words, kind in his deeds, and kind in everything. "Be kindly affectioned one to another," Rom. xii. 10; for it is sad inconsistency to be otherwise.

Should we not, think you, be ashamed to go out with a top-boot on one leg, and a black gaiter on the other?—with an embroidered silk waistcoat over the bosom, and a sleeveless coat on the back?—with a gaudy new handkerchief round the neck, and a crownless old hat on the head? Why, if in such a case shame could make us blush, our faces would be red as crimson. But are inconsistencies in dress half as objectionable as inconsistencies in temper and behaviour? Cer-

tainly not; and yet the former are visited with derision, while the latter pass almost without observation. We think more of the shell than the kernel; more of the dross than the gold; and much more of the temporal things that affect the body, than of the eternal things which concern the soul!

How inconsistent it would be for a pensioner on another's bounty to be proud—and for a beggar to give himself airs, while asking alms. Were we to see such a sight, it would not only call forth our wonder, but excite our indignation: and yet thousands of such sights are to be seen—for the proudest man is a pensioner on the bounty of our heavenly Father; and what is the richest man but a beggar for his daily supplies? “Give us this day our daily bread.” Hardly is there any end of human inconsistency.

I often please myself in thinking that many of my readers feel as kindly towards me as I feel towards them; and yet I should rather not be within hearing of your remarks, if, one of these fine summer mornings, you were to catch me in my garden, neglecting my lilies and roses, and watching, and watering, and tending with care the toadstools, chickweed, groundsel, and nettles, which I may have suffered to spring around them. You would very soon, I fear, connect with

this strange vagary all my other eccentricities, and at once conclude that I was beside myself. "Aha!" you would say, "we have for some time observed a strangeness about the old gentleman, an odd inclination for what is singular and fantastic; and now the thing is accounted for. Who would have thought that it would have come to this?" If you, then, would feel justified in thus speaking freely of me in the case that I have imagined, shall not I be justified in speaking freely of you in a case that is real? Are you not, in the garden of your heart and mind, neglecting the goodly flowers of gratitude, and love, and gentleness, and forbearance, and kindness; and do you not therein foster the funguses of pride and hatred, and nourish the stinging-nettles of resentment against those who have offended you? If you know this to be so, be honest to yourselves, and treat your own inconsistencies as you would treat mine.

We read in the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, of a certain servant, who, after being forgiven a great debt, instead of having a heart brim full and running over with kindly emotions towards other debtors, went forth and savagely took by the throat a fellow-servant who owed him a trifling sum. I wonder how many,

after reading this account, and feeling almost angry enough to strangle the cruel ruffian of a servant, have, in their dealings with mankind, acted with as little compassion themselves! We have no excuse for cruelty. If we compare for a moment our demerits with our mercies; if we put side by side human transgression and Divine forbearance, an act of cruelty to our fellow-men will be seen to be an act of the grossest inconsistency.

The fable of the Cat and the Fox you may have read over and over again; but it seems so well adapted to the subject before me, that I cannot resist the temptation to relate it here after my own fashion. A fox and a cat, says the fable, who were travelling together, made their journey appear shorter by discourses of a moral kind. "How great is justice!" said the fox; "when we make it our guide we never err, and are kept from wantonly trespassing on the rights of others." "How exalted is mercy!" exclaimed the cat; "it ought to be practised through every day and every hour."

While thus they proceeded, they were absolutely horrified by seeing a wolf rush from the wood upon an innocent lamb. The lamb, poor thing, struggled and bleated for mercy. "Mercy!" says

the wolf, "no! no! that will not do; for I am hungry, and mutton is not always to be had. You will make me an excellent supper."

"What a wretch," said the cat, "to feed upon flesh, when herbs and roots are in abundance around him!" "What a tyrant," cried the fox, "to spill innocent blood, when the oaks are laden with acorns!" Just in the midst of this fit of virtuous indignation, they came to a mill, where some poultry were raking up a heap of chaff with their heels, when reynard, without ceremony, pounced upon a pullet, and grimalkin sprang, with talons extended, on a poor little mouse that happened to venture from a hole. A spider, sitting in her web that she had woven against the mill, was quite distressed at the unhappy end of the poor victims. "I cannot think," said she, "how creatures can be so cruel!" and saying this, she ran off to suck the blood of a thoughtless young fly, which at that moment was entangled in her web. I must give you the moral of the fable in the words in which it is already written, for I should fail were I to attempt to put an inconsistency in a clearer or a stronger light:

"The faults of our neighbours with freedom we blame,
But we tax not ourselves though we practise the same."

We are, indeed, inconsistent creatures; and this knowledge should, at least, keep us from

bitterness in pointing out the errors of others. The yearnings of the sinful heart, and the aspirations of the renewed spirit, are so much at variance, that many a Christian man lamenting his inconsistencies may say,

Oh what a silly thing am I to swallow
The bubbles of the world so light and hollow !
To drink its frothy draughts in lightsome mood,
And live upon such empty, airy food !
While I have health, my moments I despise them,
And when I cannot have them, then I prize them ;
Decline a gift in value past excess,
And cringe and fawn for what is valueless.
Fool that I am, to follow forms that spurn me,
And spend my breath in fanning flames that burn me !
I do the thing I hate, and would pursue not ;
And what I most desire to do, I do not ;
Leave what I dearly love, with weeping eyes,
And closely cling to what I most despise.

We shall all do well, looking upwards for aid, and around for knowledge, to meditate deeply on our infirmities, that thereby we may at least avoid the glaring inconsistency of branding the brow, and wounding the heart of another, for the very same errors that we ourselves commit.

THE GREAT BELL.

How rapidly seasons pass with us when we are fully occupied, and how fully occupied we are when expressing our thoughts on subjects which are pleasant to us! It does not, however, follow that the same subject is always equally agreeable to the talker and the listener, and this fact should be borne in remembrance by every one who desires to indulge in discourse profitably. I will try not to be tedious in my remarks on the Great Bell.

How clamorously the bells are ringing, and with what a full, solemn, and majestic voice the big bell joins the striking chorus! It thrills through my very heart: the belfry shakes, and the spire is rocking with the deep-mouthed music. Fifty years have passed since the great bell was hung where it is. It cries aloud to the old and the young, the sad and the joyous; but it cries louder to me than to all, for I was at the founding of it, with many men who are now asleep under the green hillocks of the grave-yard. I am the

last man alive who was present at the founding of the great bell.

It was enough to scare any one to gaze on the fiery furnace—that panting, and raging, and glowing, and glaring, reminded me of the fire prepared for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, seven times hotter than it was wont to be heated. It was a fearful sight, and an undefined sense of danger thrilled through my frame as I looked upon it, such as he feels who is near some latent enemy that may suddenly spring upon him in his fury. The roaring blast that urged on the fire was terrible, and the tormented volcano writhed with vehement wrath.

But if the furnace was fearful when its rage was pent up within it, how much more terrible was it, when, bursting from the massy iron doors, the red molten flood poured forth in a torrent of fire, burning its way till it had filled up every crevice of the mighty mould prepared to receive it, mantling the brim as a huge cup of ruddy wine sparkling, and moving itself aright. Some said the burning stream resembled a fiery serpent, coiling itself round in its rage.

Not soon did the great bell lose its fiery intensity, and cool down to an approachable temperature; nor was it then a light undertaking to dig it from its bed of earth, to liberate it from

the clayey manacles that bound it, and make manifest its fair proportions; but it was done, and I lifted up my hands at its beauty. It was a masterpiece of workmanship, and excited universal admiration. The mighty mass was then furnished with a clapper; and thus a tongue was put into its giant mouth, that might alarm a host, or rouse, with a voice of thunder, the population of a parish.

It was borne to the church in state, as a conqueror in a triumphant car. The old looked on with astonishment, and the young clapped their hands. The horses that drew it had to put forth their strength, striking fire with their iron-shod hoofs against the straggling stones beneath them; and the wheels were crushed by the weight of their load deep in the yielding ground. A crowd was gathered at the churchyard gate, and the churchyard wall was peopled. How few of that gathered throng could now be mustered! Life is "even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away," Jas. iv. 14.

Hardly did I think that human power could have hoisted the bell up into its elevated dwelling-place; but the levers used were many, the chains strong, and the ropes tough and pliable. The crank and the pulley did their duty, the scaffolding stood firm, and the great bell, huge and

mighty as it was, hung at ease by the side of its attendant wheel in the belfry. Never before had the tower of St. Michael's such a noble tenant, and never was the dark winding staircase so thronged with visitors. Rumour ran babbling with her hundred tongues, and the question was in every one's mouth—"Have you seen the great bell?"

Not long was the great bell quiet, for many were eager to hear its early music—to catch its first melodious clang, that they might know if it were equal to the hopes it had awakened. And well did it endure the trial, winning its way to all hearts; for its voice, full as the organ, and clear and sonorous as the brazen trumpet, was felt as well as heard from afar, amid the voices of the mighty choristers of the belfry, while delighted ears drank in the wondrous diapason. The great bell was loudly applauded, and the fame of the founder widely spread abroad.

I never knew the weight of the great bell, nor its exact dimensions, but I know that many bells, huge as it is, are much more bulky. The Great Tom of Lincoln weighs five tons; Peter of Exeter still more; and Mighty Tom, of Christ Church, Oxford, weighs more than seven tons. What a ponderous mass! Once in my young and thoughtless years, I ventured near the great

bell, when it stood with its mouth uppermost, not knowing that the ringers were below. All at once it was pulled off—and oh! with what a murderous plunge it swung round, within a few inches of my head. The heavy timbers creaked with the fearful strain, and the very wind that smote me made me tremble. Never again did I venture on so near an acquaintance with the great bell.

Soon after the great bell was hung in the belfry, a fire took place below. Some said it was an accident; but others looked mysteriously, and whispered their misgivings of foul play on the part of the ringers of the neighbouring parish. The matter was never decided, and it is too late to settle it now. The fire was happily extinguished: had the tower been burned down, great would have been the fall of the great bell.

Many a time have I sat in the church-yard on a tombstone, listening to the voice of the great bell, when the busy ringers, stripped to their shirts, have been making merry music, testing their skill and strength in a peal of treble bob-majors and gransire cators. Some of these feats have been legibly recorded on wooden tablets in letters of gold—trophies of tintinnabular achievements, which may yet be seen suspended against the walls.

When the vicar's daughter—she was the friend

of the poor, and the nurse of the sick, and everybody loved her—when she was married,

“ Merrily, merrily rung the bells—
The bells of St. Michael’s tower :”

but the great bell beat them all, right nobly doing its duty. That was a happy time for some, but a doleful day with many ; for it took away one who was the delight of her father’s house, the solace and joy of the neighbourhood around her. I said that the great bell right nobly did its duty ; but for all that, the aged people in the almshouses, with tears in their eyes, declared that the sound it made was fitter for a funeral than for a marriage.

Every one heard the great bell when the good old vicar died, for it lifted up its voice aloud, and made many weep. A father and a friend was departed ; a guide and a comforter was taken away ; a shining light was extinguished. The sound of the great bell smote mournfully on the ear, and it seemed to speak audibly to the strong : “ Boast not thyself of to-morrow ; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth,” Prov. xxvii. 1. To such as had bound up their lives in that of their aged minister : “ Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils : for wherein is he to be accounted of ?” Isa. ii. 22. And to all : “ Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full

of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not," Job xiv. 1, 2.

I might speak of many beside the vicar for whom the great bell has swung to and fro, tolling their knell with solemn sound; for death has been busy with his freehold, the churchyard, digging and delving, and piling up the green sods, and raising sculptured stones to record his achievements. Death called away Arrowsmith the infidel, and the blaspheming blacksmith that feared neither God nor man, and old grey-headed Hollins the sexton. Hollins, with a light spirit, had earthed up many, and cracked his jokes upon their mouldering bones, before he himself was laid in the ground by another. He had grown grey among the graves, a jester at holy things to the last; but death snatched the ready joke from his lips, and put terror in his heart. Loth should I be to tell all that I know of his latter hours. "There is no peace unto the wicked," Isa. xlviii. 22. He died, and

I heard the toll
Of the great solemn bell:
It said—"A soul
Is gone to heaven or hell."

Well do I remember the loud alarm that the great bell spread among us when a threatening

foe was expected to attack our shores. The giant of the belfry, with brazen lungs and iron tongue, shouted aloud, calling on English hearts and hands to defend their homes, their hearths, and their native land. The great bell called up the apprehensions of the weak, and the energies of the strong. Fear trembled, dismay ran to and fro, despondency wrung her hands, while courage and self-possession stood up in their strength, with all the majesty of stern determination. It was a trying time: the timid turned pale, and the bold ran to their weapons, holding "hard the breath," and "stretching the nostril wide:"—but it was a false alarm, and the great bell ceased its clamour.

The great bell rang outrageously to celebrate the battles of the Nile, and Copenhagen, and Trafalgar, and Navarino, and the battle of all battles—Waterloo. On these occasions, people looked up towards the belfry, as if they almost expected the spire to topple over with the clamour. They thought of the victory and the national glory, but not of the dead and the dying—of the widow and the orphan. The great bell made noise enough, but the clapper did not seem to me to strike the side fairly; the sounds were discordant in my ears; they did not reach me as the frank and free exultation of a generous heart, but more

like the uproarious clamour of a blustering bully, out-brawling his hectoring companions.

Times without number have I heard the music of the great bell, but not soon shall I forget that day of general rejoicing when it outdid itself in pouring forth a peal of energetic harmony in the celebration of peace. We had suffered enough on account of war! We had paid dearly for our victories; for where was the man or the woman, who had not lost a brother, a husband, or a friend? Oh, the sounds were glorious! They seemed to come from the skies, as though there was a belfry above; and I could have fancied that the angel Gabriel was bending from the battlements of heaven, at the command of his Almighty Master, to proclaim peace and goodwill to the inhabitants of the earth.

The voice of the great bell has by turns gladdened the heart, and saddened the spirit of many; now publishing the joy or sorrow of a family or a neighbourhood, and now proclaiming a nation's weal or woe. It has sounded a dirge when lifeless monarchs have been heralded in state to the sumptuous mausoleum—

Where beauty, youth, and power, and fame.

In silent pomp were sleeping;

And royal heads, and royal hearts,

Were held in death's cold keeping;

and it has boomed from the belfry when the dust of a pauper has been committed to the ground. The other bells were more manageable ; but strong were the arms and athletic the frames of the ringers of the great bell of St. Michael's tower.

The great bell plays, or appears to play, different characters—mourning or making merry, as the case may require. It is a herald in war and peace, a preacher on the sabbath, a brawling rioter at the wake, and chief mourner at a funeral. I never hear its ponderous voice as I walk round the churchyard, without musing on the past, the present, and the future ; and I never mount the belfry-steps to gaze upon it, without living over again the seasons that are gone. How rapidly has my life passed away ! My days appear “ swifter than a weaver's shuttle.”

It may be that for distant years and ages the great bell may fling on the gale the joyful or mournful accents of its iron tongue, making either mirthful or melancholy music for the rejoicing or the desponding heart ; but the time will come, yea, must come, when it will be heard no more, when it will no longer sound the funeral knell, nor join in the marriage peal. Not only bells, and towers, and churches, and the busy throng that people the world, and all created things, but time itself will be destroyed.

Hark how clamorously the bells are yet ringing, and with what a full, solemn, and majestic voice the big bell joins the striking chorus! The belfry shakes, and the spire is rocking with the deep-mouthed music. I said that fifty years had passed, but it is more, since the great bell was hung up where it is. It cries aloud to the old and the young, the sad and the joyous; but it cries louder to me than to all; for I was at the founding of it, with many who are now asleep beneath the green hillocks in the grave-yard. No wonder that its solemn sound should thrill through my very heart, for I am the last man alive who was present at the founding of the "great bell."

ON THE WORKING UP OF THINGS.

I ONCE heard a discussion on the best mode of improving fragments of time. One thought the most effectual way was to reflect on the past. Another preferred the practice of laying down practicable rules for the future; while a third entertained the opinion that no general plan could be adopted, inasmuch as the circumstances of different people so materially varied. To this latter view I felt inclined to subscribe. There is no doubt that much good results from habitual reflection. Let us now, then, reflect on the “working up of things.”

It is a matter of no small importance, that in our communications one with another, we make ourselves thoroughly understood. Without this, time is lost, mistakes are committed, and disappointments ensue. How, then, shall I make myself thoroughly understood on the present occasion? How shall I best explain what I mean by the working up of things?

If you happen to know a statuary, or a cabinet-

maker, and are at all conversant with his occupations, you will be aware that the purchase of a block of marble, or a log of mahogany, is often a mere lottery, for whatever may be its outward appearance, no one can tell how it will turn out. It is in the working up of it only that this is to be ascertained. Some flaw or vein in the marble, and some decay or want of beauty in the grain of the mahogany, may materially diminish their worth, whereas, if they work up well, their value is greatly increased. As it is with the mahogany log, and the marble block, so it is with a great many other things in the world; their appearance may be favourable or unfavourable, but it is only in the working up of them that we become acquainted with their real value. To be unduly elated when our prospects appear fair, and to be unreasonably depressed when they are beclouded, are equal errors. A healthy self-possession, and a hearty confidence in the continual goodness of our heavenly Father, are invaluable.

I have been led into this train of reasoning, by a consideration of our short-sightedness, and our disposition to judge of things by their outward appearances. But the appearances of things very frequently differ from the reality. The newspaper before me relates the instance of a poor man suddenly coming into possession of property. At

the first view of the case, this appeared to be a good thing ; but, alas ! on the working up of the affair, it turned out to be the very worst thing that ever befel him. His feeble mind could not bear his prosperity, and he became the inmate of a lunatic asylum.

I remember myself an occurrence of a disastrous kind, that certainly had a very cloudy appearance. A man, who was struggling hard, as we say, to keep his head above water, was suddenly visited with a calamitous fire, that burned down his house, and all he possessed in the world. Why, the man was ruined in the estimation of all ; but mark the working up of all this ! His misfortune excited such sympathy among his neighbours, and raised him up such friends, that his loss became the foundation of his prosperity. He became eventually not only the owner of his new house, but the landlord also of many of the mansions that surrounded him.

I might, in my own case, give you a specimen, that things are not what they seem. My household weapons of offence and defence, at the first view, might be considered rather formidable ; for to say nothing of the dagger that for years has hung up over my study chimney-piece, I have always a pistol, that I can readily lay my hand on in the day-time, and a blunderbuss standing in

the corner by my bed's head at night. Would not a stranger, think you, instead of regarding me as a man of quiet and peaceful habits, put me down at once as a desperate fellow? I think he would. But now for the working up of these deadly implements, for they say that oftentimes "the lion is not so bad as his picture." My dagger is a wooden one, from New Zealand, and occupies its elevated position merely as a curiosity. My pistol is a very old one, and if it ever had a lock upon it, it must have been before it came into my possession. Lastly, my terrible-looking blunderbuss has no barrel. You see, then, that after all, I am not so much to be dreaded as a stranger might suppose; for a man who leads a temperate life is not likely to do much mischief with a wooden dagger, a lockless pistol, and a barrelless blunderbuss.

We cannot see the working up of things all in a moment. When a man, going a journey by the seven o'clock railway train, oversleeps himself through the neglect of a thoughtless servant; when he can get no boiling water to shave with, and has to wait half an hour for his breakfast; when, after packing his trunk, he requires something that he has safely stowed at the bottom of it; when, disappointed by one cabman, he has hastily agreed with another; when, hurrying

along, the wheel of his cab becomes locked in the wheel of a wagon, at the distance of a stone's cast only from the railway; and when, after hurrying to the station, with his trunk on his own shoulders, he arrives just in time to see the train start off without him—he is very apt to feel in a somewhat unamiable state of mind. He thinks all things have been against him, and is out of temper with himself and with the world. But let him read, in the next day's news, that a sad and disastrous accident, attended with loss of life, happened the day before to the seven o'clock train, the very train by which he intended to travel, and he then congratulates himself on his narrow escape, talks of a merciful deliverance, and reckons up all the hindrances which had before annoyed him, as evidences of providential protection. The scales fall from his eyes, and he sees clearly that the working up of his hindrances and vexations has been for his good.

Little doubt have I that many of my readers will be able to fall back upon instances as much in point as those I have narrated, showing clearly that things are not what they appear, and that the working up of many of their affairs has produced very unexpected results. Oh, what crooked paths have been made straight, and what rough places have been made plain, to most of us in our

time ! Experience ought to make us wise, and a knowledge of God's goodness ought to give us confidence in his continual care. Do we love him, fear him, obey him, and trust him ?

Do we possess, while knowledge freely flings
A ray of golden light o'er human things,
The only cure for worldly cares and strife.
And know Him whom to know is endless life ?

A month or two ago, in my wanderings by the sea-side, I came to what I took to be a heap of dry earth and stones, but no sooner did I put my foot upon it, than into a puddle I went, half up my leg. This puddle was occasioned by a land-spring, of which there were many in the immediate neighbourhood, of a much more formidable kind. I cut but a very uncouth figure certainly, with my muddy leg ; but for all this, the working up of the affair was greatly to my advantage. It sharpened my sight, added to my knowledge, and increased my caution, so that it kept me from greater mishaps, into which I should otherwise most likely have fallen. If our very bemirings, then, in the working up of them, may turn to our advantage, how unwise it is to give way to idle lamentations under temporary trials, and how much better it is to extract, if we can, an abiding benefit from a passing trouble.

How many cruel decrees have been passed

against reading God's holy word in English. In the reign of Henry the Fifth it was enacted, "That whatsoever they were that should read the Scriptures in the mother tongue, they should forfeit land, catel, lif, and godes, from theyre heyres for ever; and so be condemned for heretykes to God, enemies to the crowne, and most errant traitors to the lande." One might have thought that such interdicts would have effectually put an end to Bible reading, but how has the matter turned out in the working up of it? Why that millions of money since then have been spent in printing the Bible in the English tongue, and that millions and millions of Bibles and Testaments have been spread about in the world. Here is a working up of things, with a witness, in which the mercy of God has scattered to the winds the cruelty of man.

Though I have but, as it were, broken the shell of my subject, and not given utterance to a half of what I intended to say, yet hardly can I do better than leave off while the above striking fact is present to your memory. It may be, now and then, a good thing to think for you; but when it can be done, it is a much better thing to set you thinking for yourselves. Think, then, of the past instances in which the Almighty Ruler of earth and skies has overruled untoward occurrences for

your good, so that the working up of them has turned your darkness into day, and your sorrow into joy; and let it be for the future our mutual determination to "hope against hope," and never to withdraw our confidence from God. Let the language of our hearts be, "'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," Job xiii. 15. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," Hab. iii. 17, 18. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," Rom. viii. 28.

ON THOUGHTS.

ONE half-hour spent in quiet musing is worth more than an hour passed in unmeaning bustle. The calm and unruffled serenity of meditation,

“The quiet stillness of a thinking mind,
Self-occupied,”

prepare us to endure more patiently our daily trials, and to enjoy more gratefully our daily mercies. Let us further pursue the subject of Thoughts.

When the “Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul;” when God blessed man, and gave him “every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed;” when he gave him “dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth,” he conferred on him that inestimable gift—the power of thought. The properties and faculties of the body, with the senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling,

were indeed a gift worthy the Almighty Giver ; but immeasurably greater was the gift of the power of thought, and the operations of the mind.

How wonderful is thought!—it pervades the past, the present, and the future. In the twinkling of an eye it traverses all space ; in a glance of the mind it descends the deepest depths, and mounts up even to the throne of the Eternal. Grateful should our hearts be for the blessings that surround us, but pre-eminently grateful should we be for our thoughts.

But thoughts are good and evil, joyous and afflictive. Sometimes they are dressed in rainbow hues, and at others in the mourning weeds of sorrow. Sometimes they yield us a harvest of delight, and at others they becloud our prospects and blight our peace. That is a sunny season of the mind, when our thoughts

Come trooping onward pure and free
To meet the smiling hours,
All glittering bright with living light,
And garlanded with flowers.

And that is a shadowy period, when our thoughts are unlovely, unthankful, angry, envious, bitter, or desponding. In such a season,

In awful pomp and melancholy state
Our reason frowning takes the judgment-seat ;
Around her crowd Distrust, and Doubt, and Fear,
And thoughtful Foresight, and tormenting Care.

He who has bad thoughts has quite enough to torment him : you need do nothing to augment his distress. There is no necessity to add the weight of a feather to the burden on his spirits and his heart : his very enemies may pity him ; for until he gets rid of his bad thoughts, the whole world can never make him happy. What an awful description is that in the sixth chapter of Genesis, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually!"

There are wandering thoughts, that occasion much mischief by preventing us from getting much good. I know one who is sorely troubled with them ; for, though he has years on his brow, and grey hairs on his head, they lead him on to trifling pursuits, and objects that are valueless. Oftentimes, too, they take him at a disadvantage ; and when in the house of God his whole heart and soul should be occupied by the consideration of eternal things, he is running "over the hills and far away," after the fluttering butterflies of a wayward imagination. It is no easy undertaking to control wandering thoughts ; but when a Christian finds himself in such a situation that he can do nothing, he should lose no time in applying to Him who can do all things.

There are grateful thoughts, that yield the exulting heart more, much more, than common joy. These are felt when some unexpected good occurs, or when some expected evil passes by harmlessly. Oh! what a moment of grateful emotion and tearful delight is that, when suddenly the heavens, which have been as brass above our heads, appear brightly blue, and the earth, that has long been as iron, becomes clothed with fresh verdure, and beautiful with flowers! Do you know anything of these thoughts and emotions? if not, you have yet something to learn worth knowing, and something to feel worth feeling. No doubt Abraham of old knew them, when, after binding his son, his only son Isaac, to the altar, and stretching out his hand against his life, he heard the voice from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham,—lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me," Gen. xxii. 11, 12. Ruth, the Moabitess, must have had grateful thoughts, when, after gleaning in the fields of the benevolent Boaz, that very Boaz became her husband; and Naomi must have had grateful thoughts, and a grateful heart too, when, after all her troubles, she took the child of her daughter-in-law Ruth, and laid it in her bosom, while those around her said, "Blessed

be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him," Ruth iv. 14, 15.

There are bitter thoughts—oh, very bitter! wormwood and gall are not half so bitter to the taste, as they are to the spirit. They know them, who, having set their hearts on earthly idols, find those idols broken to pieces, as it were, by death, and removed from them for ever. They know them, who let the golden sands of life run on, doing what ought not to be done, and leaving undone what ought to be performed, till their opportunities are passed by to return no more. They know them, who indulge in malice and revenge. Fathers know them, who forgive not their erring and repentant children till they lose them. Children know them, who bring down the grey hairs of their parents with sorrow to the grave; and all know them who sin against God and against themselves, by the commission of crimes which, in the moments of their remorse, they would willingly blot out with tears of blood. Rachel knew what bitter thoughts were, when she refused to be comforted for her children, "be-

cause they were not." Bitter were the thoughts of Cain, when he said his punishment was greater than he could bear ; and those of Judas, when he cast down the thirty pieces of silver in the temple, and went and hanged himself.

There are proud thoughts : have you never been plagued by them ? Haman had them, and smarted for them. " God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble," Jas. iv. 6. There are obstinate thoughts, such as Pharaoh entertained, when, in spite of the plagues with which he was visited, he " would not let the people go." And there are also vain thoughts, which all of us have. Away with them, and let our language be, " I hate vain thoughts ; but thy law do I love," Psa. cxix. 113.

Who is there that has not been visited with solemn thoughts ? Sometimes these arise from trivial, and sometimes from weighty occurrences. A birthday whispers in our ears that we are older than we were, and the shadowy future seems to be presented to our view. A tooth gives way, an eye is affected with dimness, or a sudden lameness seizes us, and speaks audibly, " We all do fade as a leaf." An unexpected bereavement cries aloud, " Prepare to meet thy God." These and a hundred other causes are made the means to impress our minds with solemn thoughts. In this manner

the Father of mercies deals gently with us ; reminding us, from time to time, of our latter end, and solemnizing us with considerations of eternity. Some are threatened with death ; as Hezekiah, before he turned his face to the wall : “ Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order ; for thou shalt die, and not live,” 2 Kings xx. 1. And some are struck with death, as Ananias and Sapphira. Let us then be grateful for solemn thoughts ; and, regarding them as messengers of mercy from the throne of the Eternal, entertain them suitably, and profit by their presence.

We must not neglect to dwell a moment on happy thoughts, for they are, as it were, the sunshine of our lives, the joy of our hearts, oil to our joints, and marrow to our bones. When a man can say, “ Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased,” Psa. iv. 7 ; when his thoughts are so happy that he is ready to take up the timbrel and harp, and praise God on an instrument of ten strings ; when his very being rejoices, and his mouth is filled with hallelujahs—oh ! there are few things so delightful on this side heaven.

There are few of us who have not, at one time or other, been under the influence of fearful thoughts—thoughts against which we could not

make head, so terribly have they set themselves in array against us. I speak not here of a desponding mood of mind, merely, that disposes us to look on the shadowy side of things; but of express and particular thoughts that come up against us as a flood, threatening to overwhelm us. Some long-apprehended calamity is anticipated with as much certainty as if it had really occurred; some painful visitation of mind, body, or estate, appears inevitable; it comes over the spirit as a thick cloud sometimes darkens the sunny sky on an autumnal day. We take the fearful thought with us to our repose, and when we awake, a dread something oppresses the mind, and the frightful thought overwhelms us. We have no strength to grapple with it—no courage to look it in the face; we are paralysed—we hope nothing, and fear everything. Eliphaz the Temanite knew something of these thoughts: “In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake,” Job iv. 13, 14. Well it is that these fearful thoughts are not usually of long duration. The anticipated evil either passes away, or if it comes upon us, we are mercifully strengthened to endure it—it is not so terrible as we supposed. Cheer up, then, Christian friend! arm thyself

from the arsenal of God's holy word, and do battle with these fearful thoughts, for they shall not endure ; the cloud on thy mind shall yet be dispersed with sunshine.

There are thoughts at once beautiful and terrible, irresistible and sublime, that pervade the mind, and absorb the soul, rendering it ready to endure and to achieve. A deep impression of the awfulness of the Eternal, a solemn recognition of his holy law, fills our very being with dread of his judgments, and yet a reverence of his holiness. We would not, if we could, arrest the righteous arm of the Most High, though wielding the lightning and the whirlwind ! The solemnized soul adores the dread majesty of the Almighty, and would at any risk uphold his sanctity and glory. Rather would it say to the uplifted sword, "Smite !" than make any abatement of the holiness or the majesty of God.

And there are other numerous thoughts, some of which have no doubt occurred to you while you have been reading these remarks. The tender and the cruel, the confiding and the mistrustful, the sober and the enthusiastic, are among them. Much might be said upon them all ; but perhaps it will be enough now, if in addition to what has already been advanced, the remark be added—

Thoughts are the seeds
Of words and deeds.

That "the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord," Prov. xv. 26. And that "the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart," Heb. iv. 12.

Read, then, God's holy word, with faith and prayer, and watch your thoughts, for they are your weakness or your strength. Earnestly pray that the Holy Spirit may dwell in your hearts, and regulate all your thoughts and feelings. Ever remember that bad thoughts will be traitorous rebels in your camp—good thoughts will be faithful guards in the citadel of your hearts

ON CRUELTY.

OH how I hate cruelty ! There is no blacker mark on the brow of a man than that which is branded there by the wilful desire to inflict unnecessary pain. I speak not of thoughtless, but of wilful cruelty. It may be that on this subject your views may be similar to my own. If they are, you will not be displeased with my remarks ; and if they are not, you will at least have something laid before you not undeserving of your best attention.

Were the question put to me, “ Why has Old Humphrey never written a paper expressly on the subject of cruelty ? ” hardly should I know how to shape a satisfactory reply. True it is, that by nature and habit, principle and practice, from the days of childhood until now, I have been opposed to cruelty, whether exercised to man, or beast, bird, fish, reptile, or insect ; but as this information has not been prominently imparted to my readers, many have fallen into the error, as some to my knowledge have done, of supposing that I have no very definite notions of humanity.

A complimentary letter now lying before me, mingles reproof with praise in the following observations: "While I highly estimate the character of your writings, I cannot but lament that such favourable opportunities as are there presented for discountenancing cruelty and enforcing humanity should be so apparently lost;—but probably your attention has never been directed to the subject. I allude to your remarks in 'Pithy Papers' on angling and on racing. The idea of 'treating with humanity and handling tenderly the worm,' while at the very moment you are inflicting on it the most excruciating agony, all for sport, to become the bait of some harmless, unfortunate fish who next awaits your torture; this appears a direct contradiction of terms, which I most sincerely regret as coming from your pen."

My correspondent seems not aware that the language complained of is not my own, but quoted from Izaak Walton, and used by me ironically. I am not at all surprised that a little wonderment should be manifested by any one who could suppose it possible, that while impaling a worm on a barbed hook, I could affect to handle the writhing reptile "tenderly," and treat him as a friend. Leaving it to the followers of the meekminded Walton, and the lovers of angling, to reconcile such apparently irreconcil-

able terms, I have only for myself to disclaim the inconsistency into which it was supposed I had fallen. When an ironical sentence is taken literally, it makes sad confusion with the sense intended to be conveyed. I must in future look more narrowly to my language to prevent the possibility of being misunderstood.

But now, being in a suitable mood for the undertaking, let me venture a few remarks on the subject of cruelty. In doing this, I will endeavour to avoid any affectation of susceptibility. Freedom of opinion and boldness of language are not inconsistent with respect for the opinions of others; let me try, then, to be honest without illiberality, and earnest without severity.

Cruelty is defined by Dr. Johnson to be "inhumanity, savageness, barbarity, delight in the pain and misery of others, and intentional affliction;" and in this definition the learned Doctor may be quite correct; but I must be indulged with a wider signification—believing, as I do, that one-half, if not three-fourths of the cruelty practised among us, is thoughtless and unintentional. If I could only open the eyes of all who are now blind to the inhumanities they practise, my confidence would be strong that very many would shrink with abhorrence from cruelty.

What a blurred and blotted page is that of

unkindness, in the history of the world! What a blood-red record of sin and sorrow is that of inhumanity! What Satanic bitterness, what torments, and what tears are included in the word “cruelty!”

Among the more striking instances of existing cruelty may be mentioned slavery and the slave-trade; these are crying evils, against which philanthropists, for the most part, lift up their voices: but oh, how feebly in comparison with their indignant declamation, when smarting under personal oppression! Selfishness is ever the associate of cruelty; reasons of the silliest kind have been advanced to support slavery. When a slaveholder defends slavery on the ground that the poor negroes are brought by it within the influence of Christianity, no one for a moment supposes the slaveholder to be really actuated by a desire to benefit the slave. The veil of this excuse is too flimsy to hide, for an instant, the monstrous deformity of the crime. Slavery is cruelty in one of its most unmitigated forms. There may be, among slave-holders and the advocates of the slave-trade, kind-hearted and merciful men, exceptions to a rule—but how, if merciful, can they advocate so merciless a system? Simply because, being far removed from the cruel scenes of slavery and the slave-trade, they neither see nor reflect on

the misery they uphold. Were the iron of slavery once to enter into their souls, or were they once conscious of the terrible judgments in store for the unrighteous and unrepentant oppressors of their fellow-men, they would weep tears of blood.

Nor is war less hideous in its visage, nor less cruel in its actions. With what merciless havoc have the scythe and sickle of contention mown down the human harvest of battle fields! When unblinded by military pomp, and unexcited by national glory, we gaze on slaughtered hosts and pillaged cities, the devastation appears more like the work of demons than of men; but the war-horse, the unfurled banner, the voice of the trumpet, the clamorous bells announcing conquest, and the marble piles in Westminster Abbey pacify us; and war, instead of being execrated as a cruel scourge, is almost regarded as a holy thing. The common soldier who enlists in a drunken frolic, and the officer who enters the army to secure a gentlemanly provision, have the credit of being actuated by the generous motive of serving their country, though the object of the one may have been his pay, and that of the other a peerage and a pension! My opinion of war may be gathered from the assertion, that in my belief most heroes have cause to repent of their heroism, and much reason to pray that their victories may be forgiven

them. What an orphan-maker and widow-maker is cruel war! Truly may it be said,

Among the monsters of the world,
In nature's varied plan,
That plague, oppress, and scourge mankind,
The fiercest far is man.

I might dwell on the religious persecutions of the earth, the slaughter of the Jews, the destruction of early Christians, the burning of martyrs, the massacre of St. Bartholomew's day, and the unholy and barbarous inhumanities of the "holy inquisition;"—but these are happily gone by. True it is, that the very remembrance of them is enough to call forth a malediction from every unrestrained heart; but thankfulness and gratitude that the world is delivered from them should be indulged rather than bitter imprecations.

There is something dastardly, as well as brutal, in cruelty to defenceless animals: their Almighty Maker has given them to us for our use, and not to be wantonly tormented. Why should we urge beyond his strength the generous horse, whose foot for us is shod with swiftness, and whose neck is clothed with thunder? Why treat unkindly the faithful dog, which serves us with fidelity by day and night, and submissively licks the hand that smites him? Or why, indeed,

should we inflict unnecessary anguish on the meanest creature that God has made ?

We hear but little now of the brutal practices of bull-baiting, badger-baiting, and cock-fighting; yet have they all had, within my memory, advocates in a British House of Commons. I myself, in my boyhood, have seen the game-cock clipped for the pit, and armed with steel spurs for the mortal combat. I have witnessed ferocious dogs attacking the chained badger in his tub ; and once I was present when a bull, fastened to a stake, had a cord thrown over his horns, that he might be held fast, while puppies were encouraged to gnaw his nose, and suck the flowing blood. Is not this horrible ?

But though there can scarcely be two opinions about the cruelty of bull-baiting, bear-baiting, badger-baiting, and cock-fighting, there are thousands who are advocates for horse-racing, steeple-chasing, hunting, shooting, and fishing, as manly, healthful, and perfectly justifiable amusements. Those, however, who follow these diversions are not, I think, much given to debate or reflect on the humanity or inhumanity of their pursuit, but are influenced simply by motives of profit, pleasure, or inclination. It would require a clever man to convince me, while gazing on a horse at the winning-post, urged beyond his strength, panting, trembling, and staggering on ; or on one who had

broken his back in a steeple-chase ; or on a hare dappled with blood, and all but torn in pieces by the yelling dogs ; or on a bird with a broken wing, languishing to death in a hedge or ditch ; or on a worm writhing on a barbed hook ; or on the lacerated gills of a leaping, gasping, and bleeding fish—that these pursuits are altogether free from inhumanity. In my apprehension, wherever pain is inflicted needlessly there must be cruelty.

It does not follow that the patron of the turf, the follower of the chase, the sportsman, or the fisherman, has pleasure in inflicting pain,—he only wishes to follow his favourite pastime, and may, in many cases, lament the pain he inflicts. But the question with me is this, am I right in following out my inclination, when it necessarily involves such an amount of suffering?—I think not ; and thinking so, it would be unjustifiable in me to become either a frequenter of the turf, a follower of the hounds, a sportsman, or an angler.

It is on record, in many books, that in the Isle of Wight they had neither fox, pole-cat, nor badger, until a few years ago, when some foxes were introduced, that they might be hunted. Fox-hunting is sometimes upheld by its advocates, on the ground that foxes, making so much havoc among the poultry as they do, ought to be

destroyed. It is said that doctors differ, and it seems by the above, that fox-hunters differ also; for while some are cruel enough to doom reynard to destruction for killing poultry, others fancy themselves merciful in keeping him alive, that he may be hunted.

I should hardly like to venture the present of half a dozen young dead foxes to a sportsman in whose woods I had killed them; or a score of pheasants' eggs, that I had been fortunate enough to find on his estate; for in spite of his professed desire to preserve poultry, and to prevent birds getting too numerous, I suspect he would be half ready to hunt me with his own dogs, if not to shoot me with his own gun, for my officious folly in interfering with his sport. Fox-hunters are about as anxious to lessen their foxes, and sportsmen to diminish their pheasants, as schoolboys are to do away with nut-boughs and blackberry-bushes.

It can be no cause of wonder that the destruction of savage animals should be more popular than the destruction of such as are less fierce. No doubt, were wolves to be still found in our woods, the public would regard a wolf-hunt still more favourably than a fox-chase, just as they now consider the latter more justifiable than a hare-hunt. A similar remark may be made with regard to otters; for as they live on the finny

tribe, so most persons would be advocates for their being destroyed. There are, however, different opinions entertained respecting the otter's usefulness. "The destruction of otters," says one, "is both cruel and injudicious, inasmuch as that the otter preys upon the eel, which latter creature causes much mischief, in robbing the streams of both trout and grayling, by feeding upon their spawn." "This most ridiculous idea," says another, "is fully beaten, and the argument frustrated, in the knowledge that the trout and grayling exist only in a rapid and clear stream, whilst the eel is seldom to be found therein, preferring still water and deep mud." It may be all very well to ascertain whether otters eat eels, or eels devour the spawn of the trout and grayling; but he must be rather a bold-faced otter-hunter who would unblushingly maintain that the pastime of the hunt was not the principal motive with him in taking out his dogs.

But whatever may be said in favour of horse-racing, a man can hardly raise his voice too loudly against steeple-chasing. Too black a brand cannot be put on the brow of this inhuman sport. A kind-hearted correspondent thus writes me: "I have recently heard much of steeple-chases, and deem them among the most flagrant cruelties of the day. The more I consider the subject, the

more fully convinced I am that but little good will be effected till the religious world, the people of God, of all denominations, see their responsibility, and arouse themselves to active interference in correcting an evil so manifestly opposed to the will of God, whose ‘tender mercies are over all his works.’ A steeple-chase took place some time ago, in which, at one of the fences, one horse broke his leg, and his misery was ended by a pistol-shot being fired through his head. Soon after, a horse named ‘Larry,’ which had been spurred and whipped till he was unable to stand, fell and broke his back, and was killed on the spot. Another horse, lord Waterford’s ‘Cheroot,’ fell at a fence, and was likewise killed. At a steeple-chase in Liverpool, several horses were goaded till they fell down exhausted, one breaking his leg, another his back, and a third his neck. Is not this wilful, wanton, reckless, and unmitigated barbarity? When the steeple-chaser lies groaning on his bed of sickness, the remembrance of the torture he has ruthlessly inflicted will afford him but little consolation.”

Before I conclude, let me bring together, for a moment, the weak arguments that are advanced in support of pursuits which inflict anguish. Slavery, it is said, places slaves within the influence of Christianity; war is necessary, to de-

fend us from our enemies ; horse-racing improves our breed of horses ; bull-baiting, cock-fighting, and the prize-ring, are necessary to keep up our old English courage ; hunting destroys animals which are injurious ; shooting keeps down the birds that would otherwise be too numerous ; and fishing is favourable to quiet musing and profitable meditation. I now think I might venture to assert, that not a single pursuit here mentioned is followed on account of the reason assigned for it. The real reason is, and it would be more upright and manly to avow it, than to palter and prevaricate—the real motive for these various pursuits is, a selfish desire for profit, glory, or pleasure. To me it seems mere mockery for the slave-dealer to talk about Christianity, the horse-racer to boast that he attends Epsom, Ascot, and Newmarket, to improve the breed of British horses ; and the pugilist to assert, that he enters the prize-ring, or the cock-fighter the cock-pit, to keep up the declining courage of his country !—Just as soon could I believe the owner of a gin-palace or of a gaming-table, were he to maintain that the object of the course he pursued was, the good of the neighbourhood in which he resided.

But let me not say more than I ought, for a man may be cruel even in his remarks against

cruelty. Honestly would I express my opinion without bitterness or self-sufficiency. We are all, perhaps, too much given to follow out our several inclinations, without duly considering the consequences they involve. I doubt not, while calling in question the humanity of others, I am myself in many respects liable to the like reproof.

There are many kinds of cruelty beside cruelty to animals. While manifesting much tenderness to the lower creatures, we may exhibit a sad want of it to our fellow-men. How do we stand as masters, servants, parents, children, friends, and neighbours? Believe me, it is very possible to desire the abolition of slavery, to support the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, to be an advocate for peace, and to abstain from racing, hunting, shooting, and fishing, and still systematically to practise cruelty every day of our lives. A bitter husband, a negligent wife, a severe parent, a disobedient child, an unkind master or mistress, and a dishonest servant, are all very cruel characters.

As I have aforetime somewhat overlooked the consideration of this subject, and as you may have fallen into the same error, it is high time that we should now try to amend our fault. Let us abhor cruelty to the lower creation, and prac-

tise kindness one to another, neglecting neither the body nor the soul. If we are not anxious for our own souls, we are cruel to ourselves. If we are careless about the souls of others, then are we cruel to our neighbours.

ON MIRY ROADS.

THE narrative that I am about to give will, I doubt not, entertain you, though I suspect you will smile at my expense while you are listening to my story. Personal adventures are usually interesting, when simply told ; nor does a sprinkling of cheerfulness, or even of drollery, at all diminish the agreeable influence they exercise over us. Seldom am I better pleased than when I make my readers smile, if I can give them some good hints at the same time.

I have been spending a week, and a pleasant week too, at a cottage in a garden, and I found the place an excellent school to teach me humility and circumspection ; not merely because it was a cottage, for a man may be as proud and careless in a cottage as in a king's palace, but on account of the homeliness of its construction.

In the dark, narrow passage leading to the back room on the ground floor was a low beam, that supported the ceiling ; so low that I could not pass it without stooping. Above the staircase, also, was a beam, just like the other, and the

passage to the door leading to the garden was constructed in a similar manner; so that, go in what direction I would, a stooping attitude was necessary. In addition to all this, in each of the shadowy narrow passages there was a step, down which one unaccustomed to the premises would be likely to trip.

For the first few days, scarcely an hour passed without my being reminded, either that I carried my head too high, or that I did not take heed to my steps. If I passed into the back room, or ran up stairs in a hurry, my head received a reprimand that sometimes made me stagger; when I attempted to sally forth into the garden to enjoy the fresh air, my best beaver was often knocked from my head by the projecting beam; and whether I went to the right or to the left, I found it hard to escape a stumble. Often might I have been seen, rubbing my chastised brow, pushing my misshapen hat into its proper form, or trying to recover myself from a trip.

These repeated rebukings, however, had their influence, so that, by degrees, they became less frequent; until, at last, accommodating myself to my circumstances, I crept along the low passage to the back apartment in a very humble way, ascended the staircase with my head bowed down, walked in the direction of the garden with my

hat in my hand, and bore in mind the descending step. This humility and watchfulness, brought about by reproof, were not without their recompense, for I no longer had my best beaver crushed into uncouth forms, nor received blows on my brow, nor was scared by repeated stumbles. In short, though I held my head high in the beginning of my visit, I carried it very low at the latter end; and, though for some time I was always in danger of falling, I at length learned to walk circumspectly.

It is recorded in the book of truth, that "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall," Prov. xvi. 18; and this being the case, we ought not to repine, but rather to rejoice at those reproving providences that keep us humble. Into how many troubles does pride lead us! The blows on my brow, the crushings of my beaver hat, and my repeated stumbles, trifling as they were in themselves, may yet serve to set forth the weightier troubles that a proud heart and an inconsiderate spirit bring upon themselves. How striking are the words of the prophet, "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou

set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord," Obad. 3. My visit to the cottage has done me good, and I look back to it with thankfulness and pleasure.

But it was not to speak of the cottage that I took up my pen: a very different subject occupied my thoughts. Often, when I purpose to treat on one subject, another presents itself suddenly to my mind, and wins away, for a moment, my regard. As I meant to treat on miry roads, I will now proceed to follow out my intention.

Most of my readers must be aware of a fondness on my part for my own personal adventures. To relate, now and then, the particulars of some enterprise or undertaking in which I have had my share, is pleasant to me; and if, in telling my story, I can mingle the cheerful and the grave, the humorous and the useful, so much the more am I gratified. Were I to relate one-half of my rambling adventures in the rainy month of January last, I should run no small risk of wearying others, while I ministered to my own pleasure; I cannot, however, resist the temptation to describe one of them. In doing this, I will try to trespass on my reader's patience as little as possible.

Having already put on record several of my private peregrinations, I will here indulge in a hasty glance at one or two of them. Some of you may

remember the hopeful disposition manifested by me in a rainy ramble, many years ago. In the midst of the shower I hoped for fine weather, and in the dirty lane I looked forward to the fields. When the long grass wet my feet, I said to myself, the fields will not all be grass; when the saturated bossy clover blossoms bobbed against my legs, I trusted the fields would not all be clover; when the broad leaves of the potatoes emptied the waters they contained upon my shoes and stockings, I sustained myself with the thought that they would not all be potato fields. In this manner I went on, till I came to a snug lane, abounding with blackberries. "The storm abated, the roads got drier, the sun shone in the skies, and Old Humphrey banqueted on blackberries."

On another occasion, after a shower of rain, I asked a countryman to direct me the best road to a farm-house, to which I was going. "I cannot go across the fields," said I, "for the long grass, and the vetches, and the corn-stalks are too wet." "You may safely venture, sir," replied he, "for there is nothing to hurt." Nothing to hurt!—Why the grass-field took away all the bloom of the blacking-brush from my boots, and Day and Martin would have been ashamed of me. Nothing to hurt!—Why, before I had crossed the piece of

vetches, my feet were wringing wet. Nothing to hurt, indeed!—Why long before I had cleared the corn-field, my stockings were soaked through and through, up to my knees, as thoroughly as if I had walked across the horse-pond, instead of across the fields. “Well!” said I, “had my poor legs and feet been defended with the thick leather leggings, and hob-nailed water-tight shoes of the countryman, there might have been nothing to hurt; but accoutred as I am in a pair of London-made boots, by no means remarkable either for thickness of sole or strength of upper-leather, the case is indeed different. Let me, however, make the best of it. The countryman meant no evil; he thought but little of a wet foot; and, therefore, I will try to think but little of it too.” So I walked myself dry when I came to the road, and found nothing to hurt after all.

There are few people who have not had, at one time or other, some experience in miry lanes. Such as live in the country are familiar with them; and those who dwell in towns and cities, from the circumstance of their not being accustomed to them, and being too thinly shod to contend with them without great inconvenience, are absolutely affrighted at their very appearance. A countryman, with his thick-soled boots tied firmly round his ankles, and a pair of rough

brown gaiters over his legs, may go through any thing; but to a townsman, in thin-soled shoes or boots, and black cassimere trousers, a soft, clayey lane, thoroughly softened by a fortnight's rain, and thoroughly cut up with cart and wagon wheels, is by no means a trifling calamity. I wish you could have seen the lane through which I had to walk.

Blame me for it who will, I am fond of a clean shoe, and a clean boot, and so long as there is any choice of roads, I am somewhat particular in choosing the cleaner one; when there is no choice, however, when the case is inevitable, I can dash through a puddle as resolutely as most of my neighbours.

For the preceding fortnight the rain had been almost incessant, so that many a good road had been made bad, and many a bad road had become abominable, when I set off, with a stick in my hand, and an umbrella under my arm, in the direction of the river. I had a walk of about five miles before me, reckoning as the crow flies; but the distance I made it in my devious wandering in search of cleaner pathways, must have been ten, if measured by any land-surveyor in the county. Fancy me, if you can, in my peregrinations, a gray-headed old man, with a cheerful heart, picking his way over muddy crossings,

through clayey fields, and along miry lanes. Oh, the inestimable blessing of a grateful and elastic spirit, that can turn all occurrences to the best advantage, find gratification in unpromising scenes, and hope in the darkest hour!

The long, and seemingly interminable lane, through which I plodded, as it descended lower and lower, grew worse and worse, until it became so bad, that serious thoughts of turning back forced themselves on my mind. Pride and prudence had a hard struggle; but a strong desire to see the friends that awaited me decided the contention, and on I went, bolstering up my courage as well as I could. "I hear people talk of being up to their knees," said I, "why, I am not yet up to my ankles."

By-and-by I came to a gate that led from the lane into a field; and this gave me a choice of roads very opportunely, for hardly could I plod any further along the miry lane. The field presented but a cheerless prospect, for I knew that the wet stubble would soon saturate my trousers. There had, however, been a narrow pathway close up to the sloping bank under the hedge; though the sheep, by treading it down, had reduced it to one general puddle. Along this puddly pathway I wound my way, bending my body, and

leaning on my stick in one hand, and my umbrella in the other, as I pressed up close under the hedge : "What odd forms circumstances crush us into," said I, soliloquizing with myself. "Had I but a dog and a string, I should look like a genuine beggar." Even in this forlorn situation, sorely tried by the slippery bank, the wet stubble, and the clayey puddle, I found comfort.

In one place flat stepping-stones had been laid down ; in another, a hurdle had been put across a ditch ; and in a third spot a gate-post lay in a shallow pool of water that I could not avoid. No doubt this had been done for the benefit of those who placed them there, but I felt as grateful as if it had been all done for me. Now and then, too, I saw footprints in the mud, which the sheep had not obliterated. "Come ! come !" said I, "there have been pilgrims here before me, and if they have won their way, why should not I ?"

After skirting several fields in this way, I arrived at another gate that led into the long miry road which was, at that spot, very much worse than it was where I had last seen it. At the moment, a butcher's boy, mounted on a horse half covered with mud, rode up the lane. From him I learned that it was "onpossible" for anybody on foot to go down the lane ; that it was ten times worse

lower down, under the wood ; and though there was another road, if I crossed the fields, yet I should find it rather the worst of the two.

Sad as my dilemma was, one glance at the road up which the butcher's boy had floundered with his horse, convinced me that I ran but little risk of meeting with a worse pathway : so, without further hesitation, I struck across the fields with a light heart and determined spirit. The buoyancy of my disposition prevailed ; and I went on, thus talking to myself, "Come ! come ! things are not so bad, after all. I cannot say much, it is true, for my appearance, for in truth I am in a pretty pickle ; but, there is no one here to see me. Then, again, by trudging along the miry lane, I have avoided the flooded fields yonder by the brook ; and besides, a fourth part of my journey is now performed. The moles, I see, have been at work here, burrowing under the mud, and the rooks yonder are flying over it. Yes, yes, my friends !—well you may caw, for you have the upper hand of me now, winnowing your way through the fresh balmy sky a thousand feet above the mire. I hear the gabbling of geese in the distance, as if they were flying to the pond, and the pleasant voices of sportive children reach my ears ; so that there are happy beings in the world yet. Things are not so bad with me, after

all. So long as I see the bit of blue in the sky yonder, and hear, as I do, the song of the singing-bird, well may I be cheerful."

In this manner I continued my walk; at one moment glancing ruefully at my muddy boots, and at the next, crying out, "Well! well! it cannot be helped. I wonder," thought I, still endeavouring to make the best of things, "what sort of roads the new settlers have in some of the colonies; rather rough, I am thinking. Would Humboldt, Bruce, or Belzoni, or Mungo Park, or Campbell, or Waterton, or Parry, or Ross, or Catlin, or Lander, when on their travels, have cared a rush about having to perform such a walk as mine?—Not they. You are well off, Mr. Humphrey; you are very well off, after all."

The felled trees, the fresh-cleared coppice, the swollen brook, and other objects, interested me much as I walked on; but many of the wet stubble-fields were ploughed in patches, and the soft, saturated, ploughed clay would not bear my weight; I was therefore obliged every now and then to take a flying leap over the ploughed furrows, to prevent my sinking in half up to my knees. At last I came to the critical point—a narrow lane.

The lane, if such a clayey-puddle deserves to be dignified by the name, reached from the stone

basin of clear water, filled by the brook used for sheep-washing, to the cottages, a distance of less than a third of a mile; and such another mud-pit of communication from one place to another is hardly, I should think, to be found, flanked as it is by an impenetrable hedge on the one side, and a running brook on the other: the miry lane up which the butcher's boy had floundered on horseback was, compared with it, a very respectable pathway. At the first view of this formidable object, it did appear to me to be "a complete stopper;" no wonder that, like a prudent general, I paused to reconnoitre.

While I stood up in the hedge, reduced to extremity, three horses came wading along the lane, attended by two youthful countrymen, whose hobnailed ankle-boots bore full testimony to the depth of the trouble through which I had to pass. I saw with dismay the bemired legs of the young rustics; and I saw also—ay, and felt it too—the merry leer in their eyes, as they touched their hats in passing, leaving me "alone to my glory." It would be painful to describe the ridiculous position in which I was constrained to put myself in passing that lane: now, with the bottoms of my trousers turned up, perched on the top of the bank; now up to my ankles in the yielding clay; now forcing my way through the hedge; and

now wading the flooded ground by the side of the brook. Well, somehow or other, I achieved the undertaking; scraped the muddy clay as well as I could from my bemired boots; arrived safe on the summit of the rising ground, and pursued my way across the fields; singing with my heart, rather than my tongue, my favourite hymn,

“When all thy mercies, O my God!”

There are other miry roads besides those that are found in country places, and among them are the miry roads of sin and sorrow. Fain would I dwell upon them for a moment, but already have I written more than I intended. Whether up to our knees in mire, or up to our necks in trouble, let us encourage an unrepining and grateful spirit, in looking to Him of whom David spake when he said, “He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God,” Psa. xl. 2, 3.

ON WALKING-STICKS.

It is a common saying, "When a ship gets under weigh, no one can tell the port she will make;" and something like this is true of general readers; for the contents of the books, pamphlets, and paragraphs they read, are often so very different to their titles, that they are led by them where they never expected to go. In reading a newspaper, we never can be sure that the announcement, "The British Parliament," will not introduce to our notice "Parr's Life Pills;" "A national discovery," lead the way to the clothing establishment of "Moses and Son;" and "The greatest fact of the age" end in "Holloway's Ointment."

Sometimes, however, we are agreeably surprised when a book or paper branches out into unexpected subjects of interest, giving an unlooked-for fulness and variety to the topic under consideration, just as the embellishments of architecture, though they add nothing to the strength of an edifice, greatly enrich it, and add to its beauty. It is possible, nay, indeed, highly probable, that this paper or chapter, "Old Humphrey or

Walking-Sticks," may branch out a little in the same way.

Many of my readers may care but little about walking-sticks, and I, perhaps, running into the opposite extreme, value them beyond their real worth. Certain it is, that I cannot take into my hand the walking-stick of a friend who has quitted the world before me, without some emotion: an inclination to muse and meditate on the past comes over me, and a desire to recall those seasons in which we have walked together, and taken counsel one of another. Call it a weakness if you will; but the walking-stick of one whom I have respected and loved, has much influence over me. There are some relics that I prize. Were the staff in existence, and in my possession, with which father Jacob passed over Jordan, it would be estimated by me very highly.

A man who uses a walking-stick, has a quick eye in observing the walking-sticks of his neighbours. Not easily would you pass by me with a stick or staff of any kind in your hand, without a glance of inquiry. One man walks with a stick close under his arm; another carries it horizontally, poising it by the middle; a third holds it up as a soldier on duty holds up his sword; a fourth bears it on his shoulder, as though it were a

log of timber; a fifth twirls it round and round by the hook; a sixth walks with it so that it is up in the air and down on the ground alternately, every fourth step; while a seventh, who really stands in need of its support, sets it firmly on the earth every second step that he takes, looking narrowly before him, lest inadvertently he should place it on a piece of orange-peel, or other substance of a slippery kind.

What a variety of pictures, connected with walking-sticks, are now flitting before me! An old gentleman, with high-quartered shoes, and the flaps of his embroidered waistcoat half down his thighs, is grasping his gold-headed cane as he walks up the hill to the parish church. An old lady in ruffles and stiff brocade is holding her high walking stick a full foot from the top, as she takes her way to the almshouses, her heart beating with kindness towards the poor. A venerable man, in a loose coat, with white, flowing hair, is talking kindly to a party of boys, and pointing with his staff to the setting sun. And a cottager, as he is passing by the skirt of the coppice, pulls down a nut-bough with the hook of his stick, for a group of ragged children.

But we must not be satisfied in thus treating on walking-sticks generally; let us enter more into particulars; for as there is a great difference

between a hazel and a holly-stick, an ash-plant and a Malacca cane, a whangee and a warted crab, a bamboo and a blackthorn, so every sort has its kindred associations. Try to fancy yourself standing with me in the shop of a stick-seller, with an assortment of walking-sticks spread out before us, from the thin cane that would delight a child, to the club almost suited to the grasp of a giant. The different bundles around, of sticks of all kinds, excite my fancy. Listen to the thoughts that they call up in my mind.

The carved-headed, old, oaken staff reminds me of the fine carved oaken chimney-pieces that I have seen, and the beautiful carved stalls and screens in cathedrals. It reminds me of Damory's oak, more than threescore feet round the stem, and of the tree in which king Charles concealed himself from his pursuers. It brings before me the oak, under which the angel of the Lord sat, when he appeared unto Gideon; and it brings, too, the oaks of Bashan, and English forests, to my fancy. I see the woodman wielding his sharp axe, while the dry, white chips fly around him; and I hear the crash of the mighty trunk and the splintering of its goodly branches. I go to the dockyard, and gaze on the building of ships. I see the launching of a noble vessel, and accompany it through all the changes of an eventful

voyage. At one time it is in the calm, sitting motionless on the waters; and at another, in the storm, seemingly the sport of angry ocean! Now it is among the icebergs of the north, and now passing the line under the burning beams of the meridian sun. Yesterday it was proudly ploughing its way through the foaming waves, and to-day, dismasted and wrecked, it is beating its shattered hull against the pointed rocks.

The twisted vine, scraped and varnished as it has been, is very unlike the stem and the branch of the tree that bears the grape, but it fails not to remind me of the countries where vines abundantly grow—light-hearted France, and Spain and Portugal, troubled with intestine broils. It reminds me, also, of the Holy Land, where the once highly-favoured, but now widely-scattered Jewish people, sat in safety under their own vines and fig-trees. It brings to my memory the words of the Redeemer, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman,” John xv. 1; and it presents to my remembrance the picture of many a peaceful English cottage, standing on a sunny slope, with neatness and simplicity inside, and outside a clustered vine running up the white-washed wall.

The gold-headed cane, with the silk tassel, is certainly a noble-looking walking-stick; but the

precious metal of the handle is more eloquent than the cane itself; though the latter, coming as it does from Malacca, says much to me of the tawny, black-haired Malay, usually classed among the most treacherous, the most fierce, and the most ferocious of the human race. Gold! gold! What crimes and what cruelties have been committed to obtain thee! Thou art called worthless gold, sordid gold, and guilty gold—thus bearing on thine innocent head the guilt of those who misuse thee. How often do we require to have the words sounded in our ears, “Labour not to be rich;” “If riches increase, set not your heart upon them;” “Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith;” and, “What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul!” Matt. xvi. 26. Gold has been found in many countries; but we now look to the New World, as America is called, for the golden treasures of the earth. Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Chili, and California are the principal storehouses of the precious metals. Gold is found in grains, lumps, and veins; but were it found in masses equal in size to the mountains, it would not repay the miseries which its guilty gainers have inflicted on the world. As I look on that gold-headed Malacca cane, I cannot but think it would be well could the earth, with its yawning

mouth, swallow up for ever every atom of the gold possessed by mankind, could it, at the same time, cancel the accusing scroll, written in tears and blood, that is now lying before the throne of the Eternal!

The dark walking-stick, in the corner bundle, is formed of whalebone. It has been taken from the huge leviathan of the mighty deep, in the midst of the Frozen Ocean. What dreary scenes of ice and snowy peaks, and seals and walrusses, are in my fancy gathering round! True, there is some variety even here; for at one time all is motionless, while at another, the boats from the ship with the frozen rigging, are seen in pursuit of a whale struck by the harpooners. For a season the energies of the exiled crew are taxed to the utmost, and all is life, effort, and animation; but this subsides, and round the headland is a wide expanse, where solitude and silence prevail, unbroken by the sight and sound of living thing, save of the polar bear, which, on an iceberg borne onwards from the distant shore, is moaning as he raises himself on his hind legs to gaze around:

The white, shaggy king of the keen northern clime,
Is standing erect on his ice-throne sublime;
But it seems a fit adage for men and for bears,
That the great must know grief; that a king has his cares.
For hark! as he floats to the ocean profound,
What a howl through his icebergs is echoing round.

The sight of that bamboo cane takes me at once to China, into the very presence of his celestial majesty, Taoukwang, or Reason's Glory, and his proud mandarins. I seem to see at the same moment, Peking and Canton, Amoy, Foo-choo, Ningpo, and Shanghai; and tea, and opium, and vermilion, and sycee silver, and parasols, and umbrellas, and lanterns, and Chinese junks, and pagodas are flitting before me. There is the grand canal yonder, the great wall, and the bare-headed, long-tailed followers of Confucius. The inhabitants of the celestial empire are all around :

You have seen on a fan or a tea-chest, no doubt,
Their figures mid gardens and temples drawn out ;
Well ! the pictures and sober-faced people, so odd,
Are as like one another as peas in a pod.

Yes ! the sight of that bamboo has called up to my imagination three hundred millions of Scriptureless, Sabbathless, and Saviourless beings. What a thought ! Enough to bring me down on my knees to the very dust in prayer, on account of their destitution, and to raise my heart to the very heaven of heavens in praise for my own mercies.

That blackthorn bludgeon has an ugly look, nor would I willingly meet a man carrying such an unsightly weapon, in a narrow, retired lane, after sunset. It sets me to think of vice and villany,

of crime and cruelty, of highway robbery and deeds of violence. Oh that we could all cast aside anger, and hatred, and malice, and uncharitableness, and violence, and live together in quietness, in peace, and in love!

What an oriental medley of Hindoos and brahmins, lascars and sepoys, rajahs and rupees, priests and pagodas, does the ivory-hooked handle of that high walking-cane, obtained as it has been from the tusk of an elephant, set before me! I see bungalows and budgerows, swamps and alligators, thick jungles and striped tigers, elephants and hooded snakes without number. Ignorance, superstition, and idolatry have a wide domain: under their influence the brahmin is bowing down to his wooden god, the deluded devotee flinging himself beneath the wheels of Juggernaut, and the Hindoo widow burning herself on her husband's funeral pile. I see Madras, with its batteries and bastions, and the high surf beating on the shore; Calcutta, with its citadel, Fort William; and Bombay, with its oriental trees, and inhabitants from different countries:

The spreading banana and cocoa-nut rise,
And the tall Tara palm lifts its head to the skies;
The turban'd Mohammedan, long-tail'd Chinese,
The Malay and the Tartar, chat under the trees;—
The merchant from Persia, with shawls from Cashmere,
The Fakir and Arab horse-dealer are there

And the Hindoo looks round, with his caste on his brow,
For a bride from Circassia is visible now.

With that ivory-hooked, high walking-cane before me, I could prate for an hour of India and Indian affairs.

The sight of that mottled hazel-stick surrounds me with waving woods, the rich garniture of glowing fields, and witching visions of coppice scenery, wherein bowery branches, and sequestered nooks, and clustered nuts, and wild strawberries, and field-flowers, and feathered songsters, are strangely blended. Something more than "the time of the singing of birds is come," when the voice of the turtle is heard in the land, for autumn's sun is in the skies, and autumn's many-tinted foliage is on the trees. I walk abroad; I roam the coppice; I revel amid the hazel bowers; I breathe the sweet air of heaven, and burst into a song of joy and thanksgiving. A hazel-stick is a cheerful text from which I preach myself many a sunny sermon of green fields, glowing foliage, waving woods, and kindling skies. Hardly would I wish, when I wanted to discourse freely, for a better subject to excite my sympathies than that of walking-sticks; for it would awake my fancy, send my thoughts round the world, and call up in my heart a general interest for all mankind. And think you that

a Christian man can get no good from his walking-stick?—no lesson of humility, when he finds himself fain to lean on the perishing branch of a tree to steady his steps?—no suggestion of cautiousness, when it keeps his faltering foot from falling?—no emotion of thankfulness, when it reminds him of the sustaining power of the Eternal, and almost puts into his mouth the words, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me,” *Psa. xxiii. 4*?—and no holy resolution to lean more unreservedly on the promises of the Most High, and to walk more humbly, heartily, and confidently before God in the land of the living? A disciple of the Redeemer knows, from holy writ, that neither a fading leaf, a grain of mustard-seed, nor even the dust of the balance, is too small a thing to impart to him profitable instruction ; and therefore he will not undervalue any useful admonition or encouragement that may be suggested to his mind, by the staff that sustains his steps.

You have now seen, by my remarks, that walking-sticks may suggest much that may be profitable to their owners. That an oak stick may remind us of the oaks of Bashan, and the forest trees of England, conduct us to the dock-

yard, and pilot us over the world of waters ; a vine present us with lovely cottage pictures, and be our guide to the Holy Land ; a gold-headed cane reprove our covetousness, and remind us of riches that are eternal ; a whalebone walking-stick paint the dreary scene of the Frozen Ocean, and the harpooning of the huge leviathan of the deep ; a bamboo direct our attention to China, with its three hundred millions of Scriptureless, Sabbathless, and Saviourless people ; a blackthorn excite our abhorrence of violence, and call forth an inclination to peace, kind-heartedness, and love ; a stick with an ivory top discourse largely on India ; and a hazel conjure up before our eyes rural delights, that call up within us emotions of joyousness and praise.

You have been shown that I have scriptural authority for my belief, that nothing in the world is too trivial to be made a means of imparting to us profitable instruction ; and now it remains for such of my readers as carry walking-sticks, in common with myself, to remember, that we shall not make the most of the staffs that sustain us, if we get not from them lessons of humility, emotions of thankfulness, and hearty desires, in all earnestness and sincerity, to "walk before God in the land of the living," Psa. lvi. 13.

ON THE SYMBOLS OF SIN.

SOME time ago a letter reached me from a friendly, though unknown, clerical correspondent. There is no necessity for my entering into particulars ; suffice it to say that the writer resided at a Yorkshire parsonage, and that his communication abounded in those cordial and affectionate outpourings of heart that so often bind us to those whom, in the providence of God, we are not permitted to take by the hand.

One object of my correspondent in addressing me was, to call my attention to the signs of sin, abounding in every city and town. "We cannot," said he, "walk along the streets, and look at the various signs over the different shops, without being struck with the many mementos they afford us of the introduction of sin and its evil consequences into our world.

"For instance, we look on the signs indicating the sale of the various articles of dress, and we are led to think that if it had not been for sin, we should have had no need for these coverings. Again ; the signs indicating the sale of drugs, or the residence of medical men, remind us that sin

brought disease into the world, and therewith the necessity for those remedial means. So also the bookseller's sign shows us that knowledge, whether of a worldly or of a spiritual nature, is only to be obtained by the labour of perusing books, oftentimes with much weariness to the flesh; whereas had it not been for sin, knowledge would, probably, have been acquired in a far different, and more pleasurable manner. Then, again, look at the gunsmith's sign, and at those murderous weapons of which it speaks, and see one of the most deadly significations of the introduction of sin. Turn again to the locksmith's sign, and what does it teach you, but that there would have been no need for locks and bolts, if it had not been for sin; in short, you can scarcely look at any sign, but this idea finds some corroboration or exemplification."

The quotation above is, at least to me, novel and striking, and then it is thoroughly practical. If, indeed, my kind correspondent had carried out his subject a little further than he has done, it would hardly have been a question with me, whether the printing of his letter would not have been preferable to the publication of any comments of mine. As it is, I have nothing more to do than to follow up his hints, to proffer him my best thanks for the subject with which he has

supplied me, and to try at once to turn it to advantage.

Oh, sin! sin! sin! to what shall I liken thee? for neither plague, pestilence, nor famine, will furnish me with an apt comparison. They slay their thousands, but thou thy tens of thousands! They spread misery and mortality far and wide, but thou coverest the earth with thine abominations! At thy command go forth envy, anger, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. Hypocrisy hastens to deceive; covetousness to grasp his unjust gain; treachery to betray; tyranny to oppress; cruelty to afflict; and grim-visaged war, the most savage of thy sons, seeks in vain to quench his slakeless thirst of human blood. The burning lava, rolling headlong from the flaming volcano, is not more fearful and destructive in its course.

It is not, however, by a burst of impulsive feeling, however faithfully portrayed—it is not by an impassioned ejaculation against sin, that I would deal with this subject. Neither apostrophizing, nor railing against an evil, will remove it. I will rather, therefore, adopt the plainer and more practical course of my correspondent, and trace some of the commonplace records of sin, which are seen around us on every hand.

It is continually the case in a state of society,

that the origin of manners and customs becomes by degrees more or less obscure. We adopt manners, and observe customs, without making them the subject of our reflection. Were it not so, we should certainly be more aware than we usually are, that our fallen nature is universally set forth by the provision we make for our wants and our indulgences, and that sin is signified, directly or indirectly, by the most familiar objects that meet our eyes.

In the shops of the tailor and milliner we see garments of the most attractive kind, and the most alluring colours, and we feel, when arrayed in them, no small addition to our importance and respectability. I speak of my own feelings as well as of yours; for never would I, willingly, affect to be free from what I censure in another, when a consciousness of my infirmity cries aloud. I say, then, that Old Humphrey, when he goes forth habited in a new suit of clothes, feels the influence of infirmity in his heart, and that he does not remember one solitary instance, on such an occasion, of saying to himself, "Are you aware that sin is the origin of dress, and that every new garment you put on is an additional proof of your fallen nature?" I say, that I cannot fall back upon a case of this kind, and yet a Christian man should not be without such reflections.

Think not for a moment that I am either censuring, or affecting to censure the feeling of cleanliness, comfort, and satisfaction, that new garments communicate to their wearers ; on the contrary, I would inculcate in your heart and my own a strong emotion of thankfulness to the Father of mercies, for allowing us, in our defenceless state, such a source of comfort and gratification. This emotion, however, is not inconsistent with a full knowledge that the origin of dress is sin. We ought not, then, to be proud of our dress ; nor do I think that I am occupying untenable ground in asserting, that as a crutch of ivory and an ear-trumpet of gold would only make the infirmity of lameness and deafness the more conspicuous, so fine clothes, in the estimation of a reflecting Christian man, must set forth more conspicuously the sin in which they had their origin.

What has been said of the shops of the tailor and the milliner is applicable also to those of the hatter, the hosier, and the shoemaker ; for the articles that these exhibit only set forth more strikingly the fact, that sin has exposed us to weakness and infirmity, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. The different articles, then, of dress that we wear to clothe our bodies, and defend us from the inclemency of the seasons, in the midst of the comfort they afford

us, are symbols of sin which ought not to foster but to reprove our pride.

Regard the crimson and purple illuminated globes that attract the eye at night, in the window of the chemist, and the vivid-coloured lamps over the doorway of the doctor. If you are not grateful for the advantage of medicine, and medical men, you ought to be so ; but what a tale is told by these illumined globes and high-coloured lamps ! Sorrow, and pain, and death have all their origin in sin ; and thus every shining light, that announces the amelioration of human infirmity, announces also that man is a sinner.

And what shall I say to the shop of the gunsmith, and that fearful display of murderous weapons with which sin has supplied mankind, that brother may take away the life of brother ? It is not enough that evil passions should rage ; they must have ready-made to their hands instruments of swift destruction ! Can a Christian man gaze on such a spectacle without deep humiliation ? Can he pass on without a prayer that the time may be hastened, when swords shall become ploughshares, and spears pruning-hooks, and when the nations of the earth shall learn war no more ? Sin is here written in more conspicuous characters, and he that runs may read a record of fallen humanity.

The window of the locksmith is altogether a symbol of sin; for what has called forth so much ingenuity to lock up the glittering dust, and poor, pitiful, perishable treasures of every kind that man amasses together? Nothing less than sin. Man is afraid to trust man, and hence the necessity to conceal and protect his possessions by the ingenuity of the locksmith. What a humiliating thought it is that man, in a state of society, locks, and bolts, and bars his door—not to keep out the lion, the tiger, the bear, and the wolf, but to protect his property and his life from that prowling robber, that red-handed murderer, his brother man!

Hardly need I speak a word on the house of the undertaker; for every passer-by confesses by his fears, that he knows too well the sign of the undertaker is a symbol of sin. Sin

“Brought death into the world, and all our woe.”

In short, look where I will, I read sad mementos of the dire calamity that has inundated the world. Every proud palace, and every lowly hovel; every hospital, and every jail, are monuments whereon are recorded the fallen state of man: the pride, the weakness, the sin and sorrow of humanity, are all set forth in our comforts

and luxuries; in our food, our dress, and our habitations.

Think not that because I have thus dilated on things, in some instances, at a distance from me; think not, I say, that Old Humphrey has any occasion to walk abroad, to traverse the streets, in search of symptoms and symbols of the malady of sin! No, no! he has not the signs only, but the proofs near at hand, in his neighbourhood, in his habitation, and in his own heart! Within his own bosom he finds the fever of angry passions, which the great Physician alone can allay; the plague-spot of evil desires, which the heavenly High Priest alone can arrest; and the leprosy of indwelling sin, which the blood of sprinkling alone can cleanse! Though he may ramble awhile to give some variety to his thoughts, he comes home at last to the place whence he wandered, and exclaims, while smiting his own breast, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

But if sin be thus publicly proclaimed, ought not the antidote to sin to be proclaimed as universally? Shall we be told at every turning that sin and death have come upon us, and only be occasionally reminded of the forgiveness of sin, and the hope of everlasting life? These symbols of sin ought to produce symptoms of godly

sorrow, and lead us as burdened pilgrims to the Redeemer's cross :

If thus, in every spot where man is found,
Symbols of sin are widely scatter'd round ;
Let proofs of love Divine, compassion true,
And pardoning grace, be fully noticed too.

Spread wide the gospel—let it freely fly
To every realm beneath the glowing sky;
Wherever sin has spread its woe and shame,
Proclaim salvation in the Saviour's name !

OLD HUMPHREY'S REVIEW.

WHEN mariners draw near the end of their voyage, they keep a sharp look-out for land ; and I must keep a sharp look-out too, for I am drawing near the end of my book. I talked in the beginning of it about setting up my readers as a target to shoot at ; and I mean to do something very like it in this chapter. I mean to review them, and with a keen eye too. Now, then, let me have your attention.

Were my readers military readers, the title of "Old Humphrey's Review" might deceive them ; they might possibly picture me as a field-marshal, capering about on a white horse, at the head of a battalion, reviewing the troops. A pretty figure I should cut dressed up in a scarlet double-breasted coat, richly embroidered ; gold epaulets, gilt buttons, white trousers, ankle boots and screw spurs, with a cocked hat on my head, plumed with drooping white swan feathers, twenty inches long, with scarlet ones underneath ! Not that I should have the bravery of fine apparel all to myself—the poor brute that carried me would come in for

his share ; for what with his shabracque of dark blue cloth, trimmed with gold lace, his surcingle of blue web, his ornamental bridle, his bridoon, headstall, and rein of red morocco, gold lace and roses, and his breastplate and crupper with gilt bosses and buckles, he would look almost as fine as his master. However, I am not a field-marshal ; and so low is my influence at the Horse-Guards, that much do I question, if I wanted it, whether I could obtain the appointment of a trumpeter ! In one word, my review is not a military one.

And now having told you what my review is not, you will expect me to tell you what it is ; or, in other words, whom I am going to review. The truth is, then, that I am about to review my readers. There can be no harm done, regarding them as Christian soldiers, in inspecting the state of their weapons and their clothing, and making inquiry about their obedience, care, skill, courage, and fidelity. In military inspections, I believe, it is the usual practice for the troops to be put through their manœuvres by the senior major and captain ; but as on this occasion I am inspector-general by my own appointment, so I mean to take all the duties of the review upon myself.

It may appear an odd thing, when we have a new year, to be regarding the old ones—to be “lagging astern” when the whole world is “going

a-head," and in January to turn our faces towards December; but Janus, you know, from whom January is derived, had two faces—a back face and a front face. Besides, we often do one thing, to qualify ourselves well to do another. You never yet saw a man take a spring upwards, without his first stooping downwards; and I have long ago told you, that he who would stand up firmly on his legs, had need to fall down frequently on his knees. There is such a thing, then, as looking backwards, that we may be better enabled to go forward.

It does, indeed, seem to me but as yesterday since I began to write for the press. The years have fled by swifter than the wings of the wind; death has dealt around us his darts, and angels have gathered in heavenly harvests:

The proudest of earth, who made princes their trust,
With their brother the worm have lain down in the dust;
And the lowly and meek, with delight and surprise,
Have enter'd, rejoicing, their home in the skies!

Yet here am I still! But, old man-like, I am prating about myself, while I ought, in agreement with my undertaking, to be reviewing you. It is time that I began to move among your ranks.

And now, then, having you drawn up before me, shall I first of all harangue you, and tell you of the glorious exploits of the great captains or

olden time—the battles they fought, and the victories they won? Shall I rehearse the deeds of Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses?

If the idolized heroes of later days, some of whom,

Led on by mad ambition's lure alone,
Keen-eyed to glory, but to justice blind,
Have waded on through "slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind:"

If the warriors of the world, with the glittering tiara or the laurel wreath on their brows, have had their doubtful deeds inscribed in marble and gold, how ought the deeds of those of whom I have spoken to be recorded? Oh how eloquent might I be, if eloquence were mine, in narrating the conflicts and the triumphs of the people of God, true subjects and soldiers of the King of kings, and Lord of lords! But "time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephtha, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens," Heb. xi. 32—34. I must leave these matters, for they are above my

powers to describe. A dwarf cannot wield the sword of a giant, nor should the mean occupy the place of the mighty. It would require the gifted powers and inspiration of an apostle to do justice to the achievements of the followers of God.

Whether you are on horseback or on foot, whether you are in command, having men in subjection under you, or exercising no command, but obeying those who are in authority over you—in either case, as soldiers of the cross, you have been well provided for. Food and raiment, and good quarters, pay, and fair prospect of high promotion, are yours. How, then, are you discharging your duties?

In what state are your weapons? I am not asking you about your swords and your pistols, your firelocks and your bayonets, for I suppose you have little or nothing to do with such things. If you carried firelocks, I might be peeping into their pans; and if you had swords, I might be drawing them from their scabbards, to see if they were clean and bright, and fit for service; but Christian weapons are of another kind. In what state is your humility, your patience, your self-denial, your forbearance, your love, your faith, and your zeal? Are they in a state fit for immediate service, if you should be called upon to bear

a calamity, to forgive an injury, to attack a sin, or to jeopardize your lives in following out the commands of the great Captain of your salvation? I must examine your weapons.

In what state is your clothing? Not your scarlet jackets, your white pantaloons, your brass helmets, or your high caps of felt or bear-skin, but your general conduct and demeanour. Are you orderly, sober, and civil; for order, sobriety, and civility should form a part of the uniform of every Christian soldier. I must examine your clothing.

Are you obedient, obeying in all things, without a moment's hesitation, the voice of your great Commander? Have you attained to a skilful use of your weapons? Remember these are "not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Are you strong and of good courage, fearing nothing in your conflicts against evil? You are not required to enter into the death-grapple with your fellow-men, to sweep them with your gunnery from the plain, and to hew them down in the stormy breach, with the edge of the sword. It is not your duty to charge the embattled line, to storm the bastion and the battery, and to spread

around fire, and sword, and destruction ; but fearlessly to attack sin in all its forms, and to resist Satan in all his deceits. Is your fidelity to be relied on, and are you determined, with your lives in your hands, to be faithful unto death ?

I have passed through your ranks, glancing at your arms, your clothing, and your appointments, and I have noticed your movements, your marching, and your manœuvres ; and now shall I compliment you on your soldierlike bearing and general appearance, on your steadiness and promptitude under arms ? Shall I say that the correctness and precision of your movements are highly creditable to you, and that I trust a spirit of emulation will be kept up among you, that you may never forfeit the high reputation you have attained ? I cannot go so far as this. I must address you in a different manner.

Christian soldiers, there is much among you that I must commend, but there is also much that I cannot but condemn. There are, no doubt, before me, men, whose arms and regimentals show their care, men whose obedience is prompt, whose skill is great, whose courage is not suspected, and whose fidelity has been fully proved. Why is it not so with all ? I have too much reason to believe there are among you the careless, the disobedient, the unskilful, the cowardly, and the unfaithful.

Shame, shame on such unsoldierlike behaviour! Is it thus that, shrinking from enduring hardness as good soldiers, you sully the banner of the cross? I say of some of you, that your weapons are rusty, your clothes are soiled, you are wanting in godly vigilance, you have given intelligence to the enemy of souls, and you have been found sleeping at your post of duty. I now take my leave; but to such of you as are faulty I say, Have a care, or punishment awaits you! Amend your conduct, or "be sure your sin will find you out."

But, "Stop! stop!" say you; "go not off thus with a flourish of trumpets! Leave us not while the kettle-drums are rolling, and the cymbals clashing, to your honour, as if you were a real field-marshal, with the colonel of the regiment, and the adjutant, and your staff-officers around you, while a crowd of gazing spectators press forward to catch a glance of your feathery head, or a glimpse of your horse's flowing tail. Come back again, field-marshal Humphrey, for the principal part of your duty remains unperformed; you have reviewed us with a witness, but, as yet, you have not reviewed yourself!"

Pardon me, my friends! but in this you do me wrong, for I have been reviewing myself the whole of the time that I have been addressing you. Not an error have I attacked, not a sin have I put to

the sabre, but it has been my own! Instead of losing sight of myself in my review, I have hardly had anybody else but myself in my eye. Far be it from me to put one under arrest, and confine another in the guard-room, while I, having committed the same offence, walk at liberty. No! no! comrades, you shall never say, with truth, that I screened myself from deserved punishment, while applying the cat-o'-nine tails to another. I have been sadly too careless of my clothing, and my arms; and my deficiencies in obedience, skill, courage, and fidelity, are to my reproach. Let us try, then, together, to become, for the future, more vigilant as soldiers of Christ, and more faithful as followers of the Redeemer.

ON GOOD AND BAD MATCHES.

SOME persons will suppose, from my title, that I am about to give a lecture for half an hour on unsuitable marriages ; others may imagine that my matches will be either lucifer, brimstone, or magic congreve : while it is possible that, knowing me to be a little excursive, a third party may expect from me a few remarks on the matches of running-horses at Ascot, Epsom, and Newmarket, or on those of sailing yachts on the river Thames. A few words will do away with every ambiguity, and render my subject clear and intelligible.

Such of my readers as are acquainted with London, know very well that there is, in Ludgate-hill, a draper's shop, of an imposing appearance, with a very high door, reaching up to the height of two stories. Having met with attention there, and good articles, now and then I have stepped in with a friend to become a purchaser. While there this morning, a lady, who was sitting at the counter ordering silks, satins, and

other things, made use of the expressions, "That is a bad match!" "Oh, that is no match at all!" "Do you think this will match?" and, "That is a very good match indeed!" There was enough in these expressions to catch my attention. I came away, turning them over in my mind; and here am I, seated at my study table, writing this article on Good and Bad Matches.

A week ago I saw, in a party, two sisters, whose dresses showed great taste. They seemed to be perfect in fit, form, and the harmony of their colours. The conduct of the sisters was in keeping with their clothes: mien, manner, and behaviour, all was ladylike. The dresses and the wearers were an excellent match.

Well do I remember seeing a stranger, who seemed to have a decent black coat on his back, go suddenly into the sunshine, when it appeared that his coat was made of two kinds of cloth, very ill matched, for the body of the coat was of jet black, and the sleeves of blue-black; the latter, in the sun, having a purple hue. The stranger was a perfect fright. Thus it is with many; they are not what they appear to be, and they can no more bear the light of truth, than the black coat could bear the sunshine.

A man with a new hat, and a pair of shoes out at the toes, a gold chain round his neck, and no

gloves on his fingers, would be out of order; his gloveless hands and shattered shoes would be a sad match to his new hat and gold chain. In like manner, for one to be very poor, and exceedingly proud; very rich, and extremely parsimonious, must be out of order too; for parsimony and riches, poverty and pride, are unquestionably bad matches. I do not point out these things by way of information, for every body knows them, but merely to make myself clearly understood.

The more I reflect on this subject, the more interesting it seems to become. It is as though I were looking through a multiplying glass, for it presents itself in such numberless forms. Good matches there are, nay, excellent; but oh, what a number of bad matches are to be seen! What a strange, unsuitable mixture of wisdom and folly; prudence and recklessness; learning and levity; profession of piety and polka-dancing, there is in the world!

Let us try to put the subject in a yet stronger point of view. Who would wrap himself up in a shaggy great coat in summer, and dress in nankeen during the winter; take coals to Newcastle to sell, or build a house for fresh air in St. Giles's; use water to trim a lamp, or oil to extinguish a

fire; walk for pleasure in the fields when the storm was abroad, and remain in-doors when the sun was in the sky? These things would be out of the question; but are there none as strange as these that we perform? We see the mistakes and bad matches of others; are we equally lynx-eyed with regard to our own?

We think it odd that in Paris they should have masses in the morning, and masquerades at night; but do we never go to divine worship in a light-hearted, merry-making spirit, and return home from the house of God talking of sticks and straws, or of things equally unimportant? We regret that heathens should bow down to stocks and stones, and worship what is made by men's hands; but have we no idols to whom our desires cling, and to whom we devote more time than we give to our heavenly Father? Let us be honest to ourselves, let us come home to our own hearts, and let our good and bad matches be more narrowly inspected than they have been.

I could not but observe that the lady, whose exclamations in the draper's shop supplied me with the title of this paper, did her best, not to hide, but to discover, the bad matches before her. She turned them to the light, and examined them again and again. Now I fear that many of us

are apt to reverse this practice, and to do our best, where we discover a bad match in ourselves, to hide, and not to make it appear.

When Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him ; when the children of Israel made the molten calf ; when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against Moses ; when Judas betrayed his Master ; and when Ananias and Sapphira kept back part of the price of the possession they had sold, and lied to hide what they had done ; how ill did their actions match with their duty ! and what a price did they pay for their transgression ! Were history, sacred and profane, to be searched, for instances of disagreement, and want of consistency and harmony ; or, in other words, for the bad matches it contains, the exhibition would affright us. A smooth tongue and deceitful bosom ; an erring heart and an unforgiving spirit ; promised bread and a given stone ; a smile and a dagger ; a kiss and a stab under the fifth rib, have too often gone together.

At this period of my reflections, a hasty glance at my past life presents so many bad matches to my view, that, had I availed myself of no other, they would abundantly supply me with ample materials to illustrate my present remarks. Indeed I am by no means certain that the chapter now occupying my pen will not be considered by

some as one of my most striking examples. I will here, then, leave the subject to your consideration, only just reminding you that there are not only good and bad matches in dress, but also in language, manners, morals, politics, philanthropy, and religion.

A WORD FOR THE POOR.

“THOSE scraps of mutton!” said I, musing as I went along; “those scraps of mutton!”

It never answers, in writing a piece that is intended to affect the heart, to begin fiercely and end faintly. We ought rather to gain than to lose strength as we go on. It is such a sad fall off, when treating on an elephant to descend to an ant; when dealing with sunshine, to decline to shadows; and when dwelling on the glory of heaven, to come tumbling down to the glooms of earth. Better, a great deal, to reverse this method; better to go from ants to elephants, from shadowy scenes to sunbeams, and to mount up from earth to heaven.

There would be something really amusing in giving up an hour, or so, to consider how differently the world provides for those who have money and those who have it not, if it were not for the heartache that would accompany the investigation. Old Humphrey is not the man to envy and rail against the rich, nor to make the poor

discontented with their portion; much rather would he remind both that the advantages of riches and the evils of poverty are of very short duration. He cannot, however, see human deprivation without feeling human sympathy.

Yes! the rich are provided for in one way and the poor in another, and it must of necessity be so. There is some difference between the linen-draper's shops of St. James and St. Giles's, and not less difference in the costliness of the articles they sell. The rich lady makes her purchases at the former establishment; the poor woman buys what she requires at the latter. They are both descendants from him who was formed in the image of God, both fashioned by the hand of the Most High, and both of them may be, in the best sense of the word, "King's daughters," heirs of the kingdom of heaven; and, yet, while the one with ease pays fifty pounds for a Cashmere shawl, the other perhaps with difficulty lays out two shillings for a cotton petticoat.

In some of the first-rate shoemakers' shops, the boots and shoes in the windows are so exquisitely formed that a droll friend of mine once affected to regret that he could not have his leg made to the boot, instead of having the boot made to his leg. To these shops go the rich; but Monmouth-street is the place for the poor, where thousands

of patched-up old trampers, both boots and shoes, are daily to be seen, looking, with the "bloom of the blacking brush" upon them, better than they are. While the rich order their new boots elsewhere, here the poor purchase their second-hand shoes. Strange scenes have I witnessed in Monmouth-street, and you may witness them too, if you have any interest in seeing the poor wrestling with their poverty.

A pleasant thing it is to look in at the shop of a seller of second-hand books, and to roam over the old lettered stores. Some of the worthy old volumes are in parchment jackets, some in leathern jackets, and some in no jackets at all. What goodly rows of encyclopædias, voyages, travels, divinity, and books of all kinds, in folio, quarto, and octavo, for those who have money! and for those who have it not, or but little of it, there is the box of oddments at the door; so that while a "well to-do" customer lays out a pound, the poor purchaser in the threadbare coat buys a book for a penny.

When I took up my pen, it was not with the intention of writing about linendrapers, shoemakers, and booksellers' shops, and yet I have touched upon them all. It is now high time that I begin to tell you what I have to say about "those scraps of mutton!"

As I passed a butcher's shop in the city, I could not but notice how differently, as I said before, the rich and the poor were provided for. There were hanging up in front, and spread out on benches covered with clean cloths, inside the shop, quarters, sirloins, and rounds of beef, with saddles of mutton, haunches, and other joints of the very first quality. Just at the moment came up to the shop a good-looking, light-hearted, broad-breasted man in a white waistcoat, jingling his gold seals, and making a low, half-whistling sound with his mouth. He looked carelessly at the prime joints, bargained for a sirloin, a haunch, and a tongue, obtained a little abatement—more, I suspect, because it was business-like, than for any other reason—and walked on in the direction of the Exchange, thinking, I believe, no more of the money he had paid, than he did of the penny which a minute before he had given to the sweeper of the crossing.

But while the light-hearted, white-waistcoated man thus bargained for the prime joints on the benches covered with clean cloths, I observed another bench which had no cloth at all upon it. It stood at one end outside the shop, almost like a separate concern. Hardly need I say that it was intended for the poor. It had upon it scarcely anything else than scraps of mutton.

The white-waistcoated man, I verily think, never saw them, never thought of them, never knew that they were there. If he had, he was as likely a looking man as any one I know to have given a hundred of them away to the poor. It is often rather want of thought, than unkindness, that keeps the wealthy from performing deeds of charity. "Those scraps of mutton!" thought I; "those scraps of mutton!"

A poor, meek-looking woman, with famine in her face, passed by with an old basket in her hand, and she paused and looked at the scraps of meat wishfully, then ventured to lift up one of them, to turn it round, and to ask the price. I warrant you, by its appearance, that it had been handled by twenty people at least before her. The poor woman shook her head at the price, and walked slowly on, returning, however, in a little time, and making a bidding, when the good-humoured butcher told her to take it, and make it out to him another time. But though this poor woman bore away her scrap of mutton, many others did not do so who appeared to be in as much need as she was. Some, who had short tempers, told the butcher that he ought to be ashamed to ask poor creatures so much for such wretched scraps; others went away in silence; and one, tall, thin, sharp-faced man, very dirty

and very ragged, seemed quite ready to beg, to borrow, or to steal. In a word, I saw in a little time a great deal of misery, and walked away with a heavy heart. "Those scraps of mutton!" said I, musing as I went along; "those scraps of mutton!"

Again it occurred to me, how differently the rich and the poor are provided for. The light-hearted man in the white waistcoat never looked at the scraps of mutton, not he! he never dreamed of such things—they were quite out of his way. The poor woman never looked up to the sirloins and saddles that were hanging up. Why should she? She might just as well have gazed up at the gilded ball at the top of St. Paul's, for she was about as likely to obtain the one as the other. "Those scraps of mutton!" thought I; "those scraps of mutton!"

You may, perhaps, be thinking, reader, and I hope you are, that I ought to have helped some of the poor creatures described by me. Supposing, however, that I was deficient in kindness, that will not justify you in following a bad example. I am about to propose to you how, providing you have leisure, ability, and inclination, you may pass an hour and expend a few shillings very pleasantly. Post yourself, then, on a Saturday night, within view of a butcher's shop, and exercise

your discrimination and kindness by helping the poor people who come to purchase the scraps of mutton.

Take care, however, that you do not fall into an error. You must not expect to find them all cleanliness, propriety, good manners, and gratitude, but rather take them as you find them. Poverty is not the less real because it is attended with unlovely qualities. Now and then you may fall in with a poor widow dressed in her clean cap, whose manners may proclaim that she has "seen better days," and whose thankfulness may more than repay you for your kindness; but, more frequently, you will meet with a want of cleanliness, a want of good manners, and a want of gratitude. The words of holy writ are not, Blessed is he that considereth the neatly dressed poor, or the well-behaved poor, or the thankful poor; but, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble," Psa. xli. 1.

It is hardly well to expect too much from poor humanity. Some people never think of the martyrs without imagining them to be a company of quiet, wise, grey-headed men, as comely to behold as good father Latimer himself, and women as prudent in their conduct and matronly in their appearance as we suppose Sarah, the wife of the

patriarch Abraham, to have been ; but instead of this, they were of all ages and appearances, and many of them, no doubt, deficient in worldly wisdom and good manners, having very little to recommend them to notice ; but this only sets forth the grace of God more strikingly, that such people should have faith and courage enough to die a cruel death, rather than deny the Lord.

A poor woman may be uncleanly and forbidding, and yet be suffering grievously through distress ; a poor man may be uncivil and unthankful, and yet poverty may be gnawing him to the bones. Take the poor, then, such as they are, bear with them, speak kindly to them, correct their bad habits if you can ; but, at any rate, relieve them.

Broken and unconnected as my remarks may appear to have been, they have all had one common end and bearing ; the Cashmere shawl and the cotton petticoat, the exquisitely formed boot and the Monmouth-street patched-up second-hand shoes, the folio volumes and the box of oddments, the sirloins and saddles, and those "scraps of mutton," all have been intended to call forth your sympathy for those whose bits and drops are precarious, whose comforts are small, and whose lives are one continued struggle with the evils of poverty.

Mistake me not in thinking that I regard a lowly lot as a misfortune; that daily labour, common food, and coarse clothing are evils.—On the contrary, I believe that many a poor, hard-working man has less care, less sorrow, and more health, sound slumber, peace, and real enjoyment of heart, than his richer neighbours; but there is this difference between the rich and the poor, that in trying times the one can retrench with advantage, while the other cannot retrench at all. Hundreds and thousands of poor people, at the best of times, struggle hard to meet their daily wants, and these, when trouble comes in any shape, are of necessity reduced at once to great distress. Think of these things and look around you; show that you have hearts in your bosoms; and that you have not only gratitude to the Father of mercies for the comforts he has bestowed, but also sympathy for those who are battling with distress. Practice economy, kindness, and charity. Be assured that “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself,” Prov. xi. 24, 25.

ON WRECKS.

No doubt, on reading my title, a sea-scene will present itself directly to your fancy. Some good and gallant ship that left the chalky cliffs of dear old England, with her sky-scrapers flying, and every inch of her canvass spread to the gale, has been crushed by icebergs in the northern ocean, had her masts carried by the board in the Bay of Biscay, or been stranded on a headland off Antigua. There she lies, beating herself to pieces against the reef of rocks, like a huge whale flapping himself to death on the shore !

Or, it may be that your lively imagination may paint a yet more vivid scene. The tempest is abroad, and the hull of a large ship, which had well nigh foundered at sea, is now stranded, only a cable's length from the shore. Her bows and bulwarks are smashed in ; the spanker boom, hoisted as jury-mast, was but a poor substitute for the three stately forest trees that once rose from her deck. A chain cable is twice wrapped round her, to hold her together, but in vain, for she has parted amidships, and the shrieking crew of men,

women, and children aboard, are partly hanging to the fore-castle, partly dropping from the poop, and partly swallowed up by the snow-white surf, or the yawning, inky waves. Half a dozen sailors are crawling along the hawser, that has been carried ashore. The captain and first mate are doing all that men can do to keep order and save the lives of those around them ; nor will they leave the broken ship, wreck as she is, while her ribs or planks at all hold together, or so long as a single soul remains on board.

Such scenes as these may very likely rise before you, but they are not such as I am about to dwell upon. I could, if I would, describe shipwrecks in abundance. I could tell you of the *Albion*, that was forced on the Irish coast ; of the *Winterton*, the *Margaret of Newry*, the *Doddington*, and the *Maria* mail-boat, that struck on rocks ; of the *Amphion*, that was lost by explosion ; of the *Helen Macgregor*, wrecked by the bursting of her boiler ; of the *Essex*, struck by a whale ; of the *Cumberland*, broken by the hurricane ; of the *Prince*, and *Kent* Indiaman suffering by fire ; of the *Jacques*, and the famine that raged on board her ; of the *Neva*, and *Amphitrite*, in which between two and three hundred female convicts found a watery grave ; and of the far-famed *Royal George*, that went down at Spithead, with eight or nine

hundred souls on board. I might, also, say a few words about the President, that is now, perhaps, lying a thousand fathom deep in the heaving ocean, though the particulars of her wreck may remain unknown until the sea shall give up its dead. On these events have I mused and moralized, making myself familiar with them in all their distress and fearfulness ; but, now, other objects are before me.

Sad scenes there are on the heaving ocean, but hardly more sad than many on the land. There are wrecks on both—wretched wrecks, that ought in every case to excite our sympathy, to put us on our guard, or to make us grateful for Almighty protection. Leaving others, then, to paint prosperous scenes, I will try to depict a few of the wrecks of life. Metaphors, like shadows, only imperfectly represent the substance of things, therefore away with comparison. They are not ships, but men that I would describe. Men, hopeless and heart-stricken, proscribed and banished from sunny paths to the gloomy haunts of poverty and neglect. Children of the shade—poor, solitary, perishing castaways ; wrecked, ruined, and stranded, objects of derision, and spectacles of commiseration and reproach, serving,

As sober thought or fancy may prevail,
To point a moral or adorn a tale.

And here I could all but weep with anguish at

the misery that mine eyes have seen, brought about by thoughtlessness, folly, error, and crime. True the sufferers were erring creatures, but their sufferings were none the less severe on that account. True they had trifled with opportunities of getting good and doing good, neglected their duties, and some of them had transgressed, grievously transgressed, against God and man; but this only added to their trouble. The bitterest ingredient in the cup of sorrow to him who drinks of it, is the knowledge that he himself has prepared the nauseous draught. An accusing conscience adds poignancy to calamity. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?"

In looking at the wrecks of life, cast away all unkindness, and think not more highly of yourselves than you ought to think. Take my word for it, if you have no better authority, that the cleanest walker sometimes splashes his stockings; that the most vigilant sentinel is, now and then, given to be drowsy; and that every son and daughter of Adam has reason enough to wish some deeds blotted from remembrance that have been done, and others done that have not been performed. Look at the errors of some of the best men as recorded in Scripture. It would be unlawful to refer to

these as an apology for transgression, but it is quite lawful to refer to them to repress bitterness, to stop the boasting mouth of self-estimation, and to humble our souls at the Redeemer's feet. Again, I say, cast away unkindness, show consideration, and encourage thoughtfulness, while reading my remarks.

Rapidly have flown the days since, as a visitor, I saw gathering round a friendly hearth a domestic group. Youth and beauty presided at the piano-forte, agreeable maturity engaged in cheerful conversation, and matronly age spread a sobriety and sedateness around. Daughter, mother, and grandmother, each had advantages, and property and respectability were theirs. Thus was it then ; but how sad, how solemnly sad, was the change in future years ! "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder," Prov. xxiii. 31, 32. To the allurements of the intoxicating cup, age, maturity, and youth, fell victims. Melancholy enough was the career of the latter ladies, but of the aged one the end was awful. A night of excess was followed by a morn of fearful retribution, for she was found on the floor burned to a cinder. What a wreck was here !

I knew one who, in the former part of his life, was proud, by far too proud to accost me without an air of superiority ; but a change came over him, and brought him down very low. Pride, and idleness, and error, were his companions, and for years his life was spent in appealing to the charity of his former friends. While I write these remarks his last letter is before me, in which, thanking me a “thousand times” for past favours, he pleads as “a dying man” for an additional “shilling.” I saw him on his death-bed, the wretched remains of his former self.

It was, as it were, but the other day that I was in company, listening to the remarks of one who stood high, very high in the world’s regard ; his lip was eloquence, his words were wisdom, and thousands would have regarded his acquaintance as an honour. Alas ! he wandered in crooked paths, and lost not only what he possessed of this world’s wealth, but his reputation also, till he became a by-word of reproach, a target for the shaft of ridicule and scorn. Why, the crazy hull that lies stranded on the rocky shore ; nay, the broken ship that went down headlong a hundred fathoms to the dark bottom of the heaving ocean, is not a more melancholy wreck. Oh, it must be a bitter thing, after walking erect and fearlessly

among men, to go stooping, and blinking, and skulking through the dark avenues of life to avoid the glance of a human eye! Such as endure this have a downhill-path, for their view of to-morrow is more gloomy than that of to-day. Time has no treasures in store for their future enjoyment, but rather bears them trouble on his outstretched wings.

I once knew a music-master, whose profession brought him in a handsome income. He was a brilliant performer on several instruments, and by no means an unsuccessful composer. Even now, in my fancy, do I hear the enthusiastic applause that so frequently attended the exhibition of his skill. His connexions were respectable, and his admirers manifold; so that reputation, and the acquirement of property, appeared, if not sufficiently possessed, to be within his grasp.

Though we need not be on the watch for calamity, he is unwise who is not prepared for its approach. An accident partly deprived him of the use of one of his hands. His instruments answered not as usual to his touch. His fine execution, on which he prided himself, was gone for ever. He had still the head to direct, but not the hand to achieve. His inferiors in knowledge became his superiors in execution, and gloried in the triumphs his accident permitted

them to win. Family troubles added to his vexations.

Instead of making the best of his altered position, and looking upwards for consolation, he took his misfortunes to heart, and gave way to hard drinking, that ready resource of the weak-minded, which afforded him temporary relief, but failed not to plunge him into poverty. He became a wreck—a deplorable wreck, surrounded by distress and misery.

In my list of the wrecks of life, occurring for the most part under my own notice, I must not omit the case of a young man, seemingly born and bred to high expectations. Presented at the Spanish court, with affluent and influential connexions, he appeared on the high road to wealth and honour; but thoughtless follies undermined the fabric of his expected greatness, and it crumbled into ruins. When I last saw him, he was receiving the pence at the door of a trumpery exhibition, painted and dressed up as a merry-andrew. His associates called him the “baron,” by way of distinction, but this hollow and empty title only rendered his degraded position the more striking. Think not that I call a lowly position in life of itself a wreck. Oh no! Lowly and poor men there are that the high and wealthy may well envy, for they are contented and grate-

ful, and "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom" of heaven ; but when titles and wealth have been striven for ; when peace on earth, and the very hope of heaven, have been abandoned to obtain them, then a reverse in life is indeed a wreck. He of whom I speak was a wreck, for the expected Spanish grandee became an English showman.

No lengthy period has passed over my head since I read of the death of one who in height stood among men as Saul stood above his brethren. In power, too, he was a prodigy ; and perhaps his equal in stature, bodily strength, and agility, altogether, was not to be found on British ground. I gazed upon him with wonder. But how did he die ? Worn to the very bones ! Had his hope been eternal, I would not have called the minishing of his body a wreck, for the goodliest mortal temple must of necessity fall ; but as the unusual endowments of his body were his hope, his confidence, and his glory, he must have been a wreck when deprived of them. He died in a hospital, of atrophy and consumption, almost a skeleton.

Years ago I was at a feast which might well remind me of that made by Belshazzar to a thousand of his lords, for though there were present neither kings, nor princes, vessels of gold, nor

vessels of silver, yet was the number of guests on a princely scale, for three thousand sat down to partake of the prodigal entertainment that was set before them. As I spoke to the founder of the feast, his eye proudly rolled over the extended multitude ; but when I next conversed with him, his riches had made to themselves wings and fled away. Shorn of his affluence, and his influence, he was, in comparison of his former greatness, a wreck indeed.

To my cost, for many years, I was acquainted with a schemer. He was a man of parts, address, and conversational powers, nor did he lack respectable friends. His eccentricities were striking, but he stood well with all around him till he took to the glass. He had ever been a schemer ; some new invention, or other, was always on the very point of making his fortune ; but when poverty came upon him as one that travel-eth, and want as an armed man, his inventions multiplied in number, and increased in extent. When in the depths of want, his ideal riches were unbounded. When penniless in purse, he promised thousands to those who contributed to his support. The rags of his own personal wardrobe prevented him not from undertaking to clothe comfortably the whole of the inhabitants of the regions of the north : neither did the

sicknesses his irregular life brought upon him, hinder him in aspiring to cure all the diseases to which royalty was subject. Scheming and the glass were his ruin; they brought him to the depths of penury; they stripped the very coat from his back, and led him at last to a lunatic asylum. Surely the word "wreck," in this case, is not improperly applied.

I have just been reading of one who fell from the highest pinnacle of wealth to the lowest abyss of poverty and distress. His riches appeared to be almost without limit; nobles were his associates, and crowned heads his occasional companions; but, alas! he was a gamester; and "what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" After inhabiting palaces, companionizing with kings, and living in luxury and excess, the fiend that had lured him on with golden temptations, forsook him. Ruined, forsaken, and despised, he wandered as an outcast in the public streets, and died the death of a miserable vagabond.

Think on the wrecks I have presented to your view. How largely might I add to their number! Ask the question, "Who hath made me to differ?" and let your humble, grateful prayer ascend to God and the Lamb. Cast away unkindness; show consideration, and encourage thankfulness.

When a man loses that which is the strength of his heart, let it be what it will, he is a wreck indeed ; but with the well-grounded hope of eternal life through Him who suffered, the just for the unjust, a Christian may rejoice :

**“ Unhurt amid the war of elements,
The wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds ! ”**

ON HEAVY BURDENS.

LITTLE doubt have I of touching some of my readers to the quick, while dwelling on the subject of heavy burdens. In spite of the light and elastic tread of some, and the smirk and smile on the countenance of others, we may safely adopt the saying as true, that every one carries a load on his shoulders, or on his heart. If he has it not on his body, he has it on his mind; for the word has gone forth, "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward," Job v. 7.

Many a heavy-laden pilgrim, whose eyes are too much taken up in weeping over his own sorrows clearly to discern the grief of others, limps along the rugged pathway of his daily calling, with the mistaken notion, that such as roll by in carriages, or ride by on prancing steeds, with well-dressed forms and laughter-loving faces, have no loads to carry; but this is a mistaken notion indeed. One half the world are about as anxious to hide their burdens, as the other half are to make theirs manifest.

What a book might be written on heavy burdens! The largest folio would be sadly too small to contain a list of the weighty loads that bow the neck and bend the back of suffering humanity! Some burdens are put upon us, but a far greater number we put on ourselves. Some may enjoy more than others :

But all must bear, for "all are men,
Condemn'd alike to groan ;
The tender for another's pain,
The unfeeling for his own."

There is that in the very sight of a great load, or of a weighty object, that appears to oppress the mind. Hardly do I ever think of very heavy weights, without thinking at the same time of a loaded wagon, of the crushing car of Juggernaut, of Stonehenge, or of some bulky building; and sometimes I wonder that the very ground does not give way beneath the load that is put upon it. It has been said of Vanbrugh, the architect of Blenheim-house, in allusion to his heavy style of architecture—

"Lie heavy on him, earth, for he
Laid many a heavy load on thee."

Things are light or weighty merely by comparison. Massive and heavy are St. Paul's and St. Peter's, and yet they are mere atoms when put beside "the everlasting hills;"—what are they when compared with Hecla, Vesuvius, and

Etna ; the Alps, the Apennines, and the Andes ? But I must not allow these matters, weighty as they are, to draw me away from my subject, which refers rather to persons than to things, to men more than to mountains.

Some men pride themselves on the heavy loads they can carry. A friend tells me that he has seen a man carry thirty stone for a considerable distance, and that he had heard of two others who far outdid this feat ; for one carried fifty, and the other sixty. I grant you there is a great difference between speaking of what we have heard and of what we have seen ; but let me give you two quotations, one from the *Times* newspaper, and the other from the letter of a correspondent just received. The former says, "Extraordinary feat.—There is at present a Highlander employed on the Scottish Central Railway, near the bridge of Forteviot, who will take a rail in each hand, and carry them a distance of from forty to sixty yards. In carrying the rails where they are to be laid, he saves the labour of sometimes, six, and never less than four men. Six rails is the burden allowed for the railway horses to carry, and these weigh 21 cwt., which makes two equal to 7 cwt., or $3\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. each. A weight sufficient for a Hercules."

The quotation from my correspondent is the following : "It is often to me a great pleasure

to enjoy a solitary ramble, either in winter or in summer; for at all times and at all seasons, even in the worst of weather, rich, abundant, free, and unexpected mercies meet us at every step; and if I have learned nothing more from you than the value of cultivating a thankful and cheerful spirit, that one lesson lays me under a debt of gratitude too much for thanks; my thanks, however, I tender to you with an overflowing heart. You pointed where the lesson might be learned, and I trust I learn it there of Him, whose Spirit only can communicate true gratitude and thankfulness of heart. But I wanted to tell you of a 'heavy load,' that if you thought a few words respecting it worth conveying to your readers, they might be benefited by your remarks.

"Last week the walls of our ancient city were placarded with immense bills, announcing the intended visit of a travelling equestrian company, with camels, elephants, and other animals. These people had with them a man of amazing strength. They say he can lift a ton. Persons who were present tell me that they saw him do it. Weights, each four stone and forty in number, were piled upon a platform, resting on supporting legs, so that the strong man, arching his body, and creeping under it, just raised it for a second or two."

But though my correspondent, who is evidently

blessed with a good understanding, reflective habits, and true piety, thus writes, it is clear, from some of his remarks, that he is not a hearty believer in what he relates. He has, I think, some misgivings, some lingering doubts, about the affair. For myself, indeed, I must go further than this, and frankly own that I am a complete sceptic, not only with regard to the verity of this fact, but of many others that appear to be performed. Too many wonderful occurrences have I seen, not to be cautious in declaring a thing to be impossible; and quite enough of deception have I witnessed, to keep me from hastily adopting the marvellous as true. Our five senses, without the correction of judgment, are five deceivers. Like young children, they are not fit to go forth alone.

Leaving, however, this particular instance of bodily power, let me dwell a little on the subject of "heavy loads." My kind correspondent evidently wishes me to draw a few comparisons between the strong man of whom he speaks, "elevated on a mock throne and drawn by elephants, and Him who, possessing all power and riches, when he came to bear the 'heavy load' of all our sins, was content to ride upon an ass;" but this I must courteously decline. Too often have I run into the error of calling up and mingling unsuitable associations with holy

things to venture now, with my eyes open, into a temptation so favourable for the manifestation of my infirmity; let me, therefore, content myself on this part of my subject, by simply quoting the well-chosen words of my correspondent, concerning the frivolous sights to which we so frequently throng:—"May we all be equally anxious and ready for that great day, of which we have so long had notice, when the Son of man shall come, with power and great glory, to be admired and adored by all those that love him."

Truly, the heavy loads of humanity are many; I can only glance at a few of them. Riches, to some, are a heavy burden, heavy enough to press their possessors to the earth, and to keep their very desires from mounting towards heaven. So much is this the case, and so much is their course to a world of glory impeded by the load they carry, that holy writ says, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Seen in this light, what a fearful thing is a heavy load of unsanctified riches!

Poverty is, also, a heavy burden, very grievous to bear; and when a man is so oppressed by it as not only to be poor, but also to steal and take the name of God in vain, he is indeed in a pitiable case. No wonder that the prophet should cry

out, "Give me neither poverty nor riches;" for it would be hard to say which of the two, without God's blessing, is the heavier burden.

The diseases of the body are sad burdens to many, and you may not be altogether strangers to them. From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot we are, as it were, targets for the arrows of affliction; sometimes they strike us in one part, and sometimes in another. You may be neither lame, nor deaf, nor dumb, nor blind, and yet your burden of pain and anguish may be weighty. The head, the eye, the throat, the chest, the spine, and the foot, are all vulnerable points in the human citadel, and disease may make an attack upon any of them without notice of his approach. Great patience is required to endure the burden of bodily affliction without repining, and something more than patience, to enable us to rejoice in tribulation, or to say, "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me."

Not long since, one well known to me, who had a heavy load to bear, was called away from the earth. He lived a useful life, doing good to those around him, helping them in temporal things, and pointing them to the realities of an eternal world. Many thought kindly of him, as his remains were borne beneath the waving plumes

to the house appointed for all living, but some judged him harshly. For years before his death, without any one knowing the cause, he abstained from paying or receiving visits; and there were not wanting, among his friends, those who suspected him of singularity, selfishness, and parsimony. Alas! his nearest friends knew him not. During all this time he had been heavily burdened, enduring, night and day, the frequent and violent paroxysms of a painful disease. The course he had adopted was the effect of necessity. It is believed that, for more than a dozen years, he bore, in uncomplaining silence and secrecy, the heavy burden of his agonizing affliction. Oh how cautious should we be in judging others! how forbearing in estimating the conduct of our neighbours! What a treasure to a man is that charity, or love, that "hopeth" as well as "endureth" all things!

What a heavy burden is a doubting and desponding spirit! This is enough to break the strongest back, and bow down the stoutest heart. It is sad to think of heaven being freely offered, and despondingly rejected! If, reader, thou carriest this heavy burden of doubt and despondency, try yet, again and again, to take heart, and to trust thy Leader and Lord. Go with thy burden to him, and give over to him the whole load;

but fail not to remember, as I have elsewhere said, that as he undertakes to bear the whole of thy burden, so he requires the whole of thy confidence. Ay! and if thou art one of his disciples, he will make thee give it him. Art thou blind, he will deprive thee of thy guide, that he alone may lead thee. Art thou lame, he will take away thy crutch, and compel thee to lean upon him. There is nothing to be got by doubting him, and everything to be obtained by trusting him. Give him, then, the whole of thy heart, the whole of thy trust, and the whole of thy troubles.

In reading "Pilgrim's Progress," we feel for Christian, as he travels heavily onward, and rejoice with him when he comes before the cross, and his heavy burden falls from his back. We may soothe with our sympathy, when we cannot remove from those around us their burden of sorrow. There is a woe denounced against those who "lade men with burdens grievous to be borne," and yet touch not the burdens with one of their fingers, Luke xi. 46.

It is a sad sight to see the overstrained muscles and staggering form of one grappling with a burden too heavy for him. A sprained back is no light affliction, but it is not like that of a bruised spirit, which ointments cannot heal, and that takes away hope from the heart.

Worldly disappointments, and the loss of health and friends, are heavy afflictions; and there are mental burdens, which furrow the face with premature wrinkles, and make men appear aged before their time. Some are piled upon us by our pride, some by our folly, and others by our anger, our avarice, or our discontent. These are hard to bear, embittered as they are by the consciousness that we have deserved them; but the heaviest and the hardest, the weightiest and the worst of all burdens, are those which sin lays on our minds. Lead is light compared with the load of a sense of sin, and a guilty conscience. Under such a burden as this human strength avails us nothing; we cannot bear up against it, but go on groaning amid grief and tears. The spirit is wounded; and “a wounded spirit who can bear?”

“Up to the fields where angels lie,
And living waters gently roll,
Fain would my thoughts leap out and fly,
But sin hangs heavy on my soul.”

Such is the language of him who is tied and bound, and burdened with a sense of sin, and fear of eternal woe. He is in extremity—it is an affair of life and death with him. One way only is left to him, and well it is if he takes it. There is yet hope, for there is One “mighty to save”—One who hath “borne our griefs, and carried our

sorrows"—One who "was wounded for our transgressions," and "bruised for our iniquities." "Come unto me," says the merciful Redeemer, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28.

And should we not think much, amid our own burdens, of the intolerable load, the heavy burden that He bare, who suffered on the cross? Should not this make us ashamed of our fears, stop our repining, endue us with patience, and call forth our wonder and thankfulness?

"Alas! and did my Saviour bleed,
And did my Sovereign die?
Would he devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?

"Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in,
When God the mighty Maker died,
For man the creature's sin."

But time it is that I should individually ask, as I have elsewhere asked, What, Christian reader, is thy load? Are thy bits and drops in jeopardy? Is the fountain of thy customary supplies narrowed, and thy meal-barrel and thine oil-cruze all but exhausted? Is it a body-trouble? Does thy poor tenement begin to shake? Are the beams and rafters of the old house giving way, and threatening to fall? or is thine a soul-trouble? Is the hope that was in thee dead? Is the voice

of thy rejoicing hushed? Art thou looking on darkness instead of sunshine? Art thou poring over thy sins, instead of pondering the merits, and mercy, and promises of the Saviour? Whether any or all of these be thy trouble, the grace of God will be sufficient for thee. Cast all thy care, then, on Him who cares for thee, and who knows both thy weakness and the weight of thy burden. Let the language of thy tongue, thy heart, and thy soul be, "My keeper for eternity is God; to him I give over the whole load."

ON BEING TAKEN BY SUR- PRISE.

NOT five minutes have passed since the double rap of the postman rang in my ears. The man of many messages has brought, among other communications, a request for a paper "forthwith from Old Humphrey, to complete the matter of a work already in the hands of the printer." Now it happens, although I have a score or two of papers on different heads partly written, that not one among them is on a suitable subject, so that the request altogether takes me by surprise. It would be idle, in two senses, to spend a moment in useless regrets. To the printer the work is gone, and to the work a paper from Old Humphrey must go also; so that, you see, the subject chosen by me, "on being taken by surprise," is a most appropriate one.

Reason have I to cry out for Speed with his flying finger, Wit with his ready tongue, Fancy with her creative power, and Wisdom with his learned stores; and if I had any expectation of their obeying my call, with a voice like that of a

town-crier would I summon them to my assistance. As it is, I must proceed without such an invocation.

How natural it is, when we are in need, to look around us for help. Had I a good friend at my elbow who is now among the buttercups, seeking that health which I hope he will abundantly find, my difficulty would vanish, for he would soon touch some chord that would make my pulse throb, and set me scribbling away in right earnest. Some absorbing subject, some pithy sentence, compressing much meaning in little space, or some striking lesson not hitherto sufficiently estimated, would be set before me, to excite my fancy, quicken my sluggish faculties, and animate my heart:

How subtle are the viewless links that bind,
Inform, affect, and agitate the mind !
A word will kindle or repress desire ;
A mental spark will set the soul on fire.

I have a talented friend, whose epistolary communications are at times such a delightful confusion of sudden thoughts, happy phrases, humorous suggestions, classic allusions, Scripture texts, rushes of feeling, proud imaginings, child-like simplicity, and various other disjointed qualities and qualifications, that reading them is like roaming, not in a garden where the beds are

laid out with monotonous regularity, but in a patch of broken ground with a brook at the bottom, and a tangled hedge and ditch, gorgeous with plants and wild flowers, where you may at once enjoy separately, severally, collectively, and generally, bees and brambles, knolls, moss, and heath flowers, furze bushes and broom in all their glory, butterflies and blue skies, blackberries and sunshine, thistles and shaggy donkeys, warbling birds, balmy breezes, and grateful scents. Had I one of his epistles at hand, long enough for a paper, it might serve me in good stead ; but this not being the case, and being left completely to my own resources, I will see what I can say on being taken by surprise.

The first thought that strikes me is this. There will come a time when it will no longer be possible to call for a paper from Old Humphrey. The publications which for years have made room for my lucubrations, will, in all probability, some day go forth on their Christian errand without my homely name appearing in their pages.

This prosy, prating pen of mine
Must soon be cast away ;
And this warm heart and active hand
Become as cold as clay.

The weighty consideration that this involves

should not be lost sight of by me. It should induce me, first, to resolve that, while mercifully permitted to use my pen, no idle and worthless expression shall fall from it; and secondly, to take care that when called upon to lay it down, I may not be taken by surprise.

Some time ago I was listening to Dr. Wolff, who went to Bokhara to rescue, if possible, from captivity and a cruel death two British officers. Honour be his on earth, and happiness in heaven, who jeopardizes his life, whether successfully or not, in an errand of humanity! I was listening to the doctor's vivid description of Aleppo. There were the people, gay and light-hearted, dressed in all the bravery of their many-coloured flowing robes, sitting and walking, and exulting and singing on the tops of their flat-roofed houses; when suddenly the earthquake came upon them, changing their laughter into mourning, and their joyous songs into bitter lamentations. Multitudes were overwhelmed with sudden destruction: alive they went down into the pit, or were crushed by the falling ruins. Try for a moment to realize this fearful scene! The people of Aleppo were, indeed, taken by surprise!

This subject of being taken by surprise seems, as a coming tempest, to grow while I gaze upon it. Look at London as it was some two centuries

ago, in health, peace, and prosperity. The south side of Cheapside, between Bread-street and Friday-street, then called Goldsmiths'-row, glittered bright with the precious metals; so that if the street was not paved with gold, the shops blazed with its abundance. A range of proud palaces then occupied the south of the Strand, connecting the city with Westminster; and those goodly mansions bore the names of the high and mighty nobles who inhabited them—Norfolk, Essex, and Arundel, Exeter, Worcester, and Salisbury, Howard, Hungerford, York, and Northumberland. London was healthy, and wealthy, and proud; but her health was to be abated, her wealth to be diminished, and her pride to be humbled. The plague came upon her, leaping over her gates, entering the portals of her palaces, and the doors and windows of her habitations; so that the dead became too numerous to receive the rites of sepulture. Men went about with carts, ringing a bell, and crying out dolefully, “Bring out your dead!” Large pits were dug in the suburbs of the city as promiscuous graves. Grass grew in the very Royal Exchange, and White-chapel was as a green field. In six months a hundred and sixty thousand human beings were swept away by the pestilence. Well may we say that the people were taken by surprise!

" Mute was the voice of joy,
 And hush'd the clamour of the busy world.
 Empty the streets, with uncouth verdure clad ;
 Into the worst of deserts sudden turn'd
 The cheerful haunts of men : the sullen door,
 Yet uninfected, on its cautious hinge
 Fearing to turn, abhors society :
 Dependants, friends, relations, Love herself,
 Savaged by woe, forget the tender tie,
 The sweet engagement of the feeling heart.
 Thus o'er the prostrate city black Despair
 Extends her raven wings ; while, to complete
 The scene of desolation, stretch'd around,
 The grim guards stand denying all retreat,
 And give the flying wretch a better death."

You have read, no doubt, of the frightful accident which once took place at Yarmouth. A clown from a company of equestrians undertook to proceed up the river Bure a certain distance, in a washing tub drawn by four geese, elegantly harnessed and caparisoned. To get a peep at this trumpery spectacle, many of the people of Yarmouth rushed to the suspension-bridge, which, not being able to sustain the unusual weight pressing unequally upon it, gave way. The suspending chains snapped, one after another, and crash came down the bridge into the water, where nearly a hundred human beings, most of them in the bloom of childhood and youth, found an instantaneous death. The suddenness, as well as the destructive havoc of the dreadful calamity, smote the heart of every spectator with horror.

Fear stood still with blanched cheek ! Amaze-
ment held up her hands ! Terror shrieked aloud !
and Rumour, with her hundred tongues, hastened
abroad to magnify the catastrophe, and multiply
the number of the victims it had destroyed. This
was indeed to be taken by surprise ! To pass, as
it were, in a moment from pleasure to pain, from
ease to agony, from life to death, from time to
eternity !

The consideration of these great calamities may
be made useful, by leading us to reflect on our
own individual perils. Every hour, ay, every
moment, we are surrounded with danger ; tempt-
ation may creep upon us, and calamity may leap
upon us. Sin may waylay us in our path when
abroad, and sorrow may, unknown to us, be
awaiting our homeward return. How know we
but sickness or death may be at the door ? Surely,
then, we should be prayerful and watchful. A
worthy friend of mine, a Christian minister, writes
me these beautiful and appropriate expressions in
contemplating his retiring from the field of his
labours :—

“ How I long, or, as poets write, ‘ sigh’ for the
quietude of the country ! There should be an
interval, some time, between fighting and dying !
—a time of pause, of review, of revision, which is
more than review, of prayer, and of holy aspira-

tion ! Well, ‘there remaineth a rest to the people of God.’ Now, this interval, this pause for review, revision, prayer, and holy aspiration, is very desirable for us all ; and well is it for us, if our hearts yearn for it; but well it will be, also, to remember that we cannot calculate upon it. No, no ! To-morrow may not be ours. ‘To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts !’ Need have we, among many prayers, to put up one to the Father of mercies, that neither sin nor sorrow, sickness nor death, may take us by surprise.”

But while this prayer is zealously preferred, we should be the willing agents, in Holy hands, for its fulfilment, by fostering in our hearts a higher estimate of eternal things, and a stronger confidence in our heavenly Father. If we would not be taken by surprise, we must not be found slumbering at our post. To sleep at his post is to a soldier a very serious thing, as will be seen by the following words in the articles of war :—
 “Any officer or soldier who shall be found sleeping on his post, or shall leave it before regularly relieved, shall, if an officer, suffer death, or such other punishment as by a general court-martial shall be awarded ; and, if a soldier, shall suffer death, transportation, or such other punishment as by a general court-martial shall be

awarded." A Christian soldier whose weapons are love, and whose banner is that of the cross, may profit by this quotation, and resolve, in the strength of the Captain of his salvation, whatever may be his duties and his hardships, never to give way to lethargy—never to be taken by surprise.

I hardly need ask you, reader, if you are ever taken by surprise ; because, in one case or other, in great things or in little things, this must of necessity be the case ; but, depend upon it, that to you and to me also, a humble, watchful, prayerful, grateful, and trustful spirit will ever be the best protection against unlooked-for occurrences, unexpected calamities, and sudden surprises. We are all liable to lose, in a moment, our earthly possessions ; but, the loss of property, health, and life, may be well borne by him who has laid up treasure in heaven, and who looks forward to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thus have I done my best, on the spur of the moment, to put together a few suggestions, likely, I hope, to prove profitable ; and if you, on your part, will promise to endeavour to turn them to account, I, on mine, will undertake never again, if I can possibly avoid it, when a paper is requested from me, to be taken by surprise.

ON BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS.

PASS with me one more short half hour, reader, and then we will bid each other farewell. I have been thinking what a book it would be, that should contain the history of human actions, from the time when our first parents left paradise till now ! Milton says :

“ ————— Whereat

In either hand the hastening angel caught
Our lingering parents, and to the eastern gate
Led them direct, and down the cliff as fast
To the subjected plain ;

* * * * *
Some natural tears they shed, but wiped them soon ;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide :
They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.”

A solitary picture truly ; but, since then, sin has drawn many pictures still more lamentable. Let us take a rapid glance at “ beginnings and endings.”

Some people gather where the grapes are few, and glean where the ears of corn are scanty ; but, at this moment, their case is not mine, for I have a whole vintage, a full harvest before me. Beginnings and endings ! What a prolific theme !

what a field! what a forest! what a continent! nay, what a world to enter on! "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;" but who shall speak of the end? Neither men nor angels can grasp the immeasurable. We must take a more limited view of our subject; we must "go on with another part of the picture."

A grain of wheat is sown in the ground, that springs up again in a cluster of goodly ears. In their turn the grains of these ears are cast into the soil, and bring forth fifty and a hundred fold; which abundant produce being committed to the earth, year after year, fails not to multiply exceedingly, till a wide-spreading harvest is seen to cover the ground. Small is the beginning, but the end is very great.

Myriads of golden ears adorn the plain,
The goodly produce of a single grain.

I took an acorn in my hand, and walked with it to a grassy field, where lay a giant oak, that the woodman with his axe had brought to the ground. Its bark had been stripped off for the tanner, its leaves were collected for the dyer, its boughs had been lopped for the carpenter and charcoal-burner, and its huge trunk, an enormous ruin, was intended for the use of the ship-builder. I looked at the acorn—the beginning! I surveyed the oak—the end! And did that, which seemed a burden to the ground,

really spring from a light seed, similar to what I held in my hand? Wonderful! wonderful!

In the morning of a summer's day I visited a stream that trickled from a mountain's side, and before the sun declined I sailed on a flowing river, which poured its rushing waters into the mighty deep. The trickling stream was the beginning, the flowing river was the end; for the former, fed by tributary currents, had increased to the latter. How limited and feeble was the one!—how expanded and powerful the other!

From acorns springing, oaks arrest our eyes;
From little streamlets mighty rivers rise.

It was on the 2nd of September, 1666, when midnight had shrouded the great city, and slumber had sealed up the senses of its inhabitants, that a fire broke out, near the spot where the Monument now stands. Every one was made acquainted with its ending, though no one could describe its beginning. It might be that a spar in some chimney took fire; or that a half-smoked pipe, with the tobacco burning, was thoughtlessly thrown among shavings; or that some negligent master or mistress, or servant girl, put out a candle carelessly. I can fancy that I see the extinguished taper standing on the little table of a close room, near the bed-curtains. A small portion of the snuff of the candle has fallen on the

table-cover, and a spark, a mere spark of fire, is seen in the midst of it. The spark is almost gone out, nay, it must go out, if it does not catch one of the fine threads of the table-cover. The spark runs along a thread, and in its course sets other threads on fire ; a piece of curl-paper is now lighted at its edge—it flares upward—it has caught the cap hanging on the cap-stand—the cap, nay, the bed-curtains are on fire. The slumberer awakes half suffocated, and hurries from the chamber, unconscious that her own carelessness occasioned the calamity. And now the flame rapidly spreads to the bedstead, the table, the floor, and the window-frames. The glass-panes fly, the fresh air feeds the fire—the ceiling falls—the rafters are blazing—the adjoining houses, one by one, are involved in the catastrophe, till the whole street is wrapped in a sheet of fire. Now the conflagration is fearful. As it gathers strength it runs down to the bridge, wrapping Magnus church in flames on its way. After burning down the houses on the bridge, it hurries back to the city, like a giant tossing about firebrands in sport. Thames-street is in a glow—people hurry to their windows, and “Fire! fire! fire!” is the universal cry. On goes the flame, roaring like a hundred blast furnaces ; houses, churches, and streets, add to the general conflagration. It was as though the day of judg-

ment had arrived, and angels of destruction were commissioned to wrap the doomed city in remediless ruin. London bowed down before the all-devouring fire as before an idol. The effigied kings at the Royal Exchange broke their sceptres and leaped from their pedestals, prostrating themselves in the dust ; and towers and spires humbled themselves to the ground. Hour after hour, day after day, and night after night, hurries on the relentless element, sparing nothing that it meets in its all-devouring course. Its beginning was a spark of fire—its ending is the destruction of a city. Ten millions of property is destroyed ! Halls, ancient edifices, hospitals, schools, libraries, eighty-nine churches, four hundred and thirty streets, thirteen thousand two hundred dwelling-houses ! From the Tower by the Thames side to the Temple church, and from the north-east part of the city-wall to Holborn, all is a fiery, smoking ruin. Think of this, ye careless ones, and reflect on beginnings and endings !

The beginnings of sin are often too small for the powers of the magnifying-glass to discover. The seeds of selfishness, covetousness, ambition, and cruelty, are smaller even than the mustard-seed, spoken of in holy writ as the smallest of all seeds ; and yet these brought forth the unholy Inquisition, the cruel slave-trade, and the greater

part of the murderous wars that have wasted the world. How much of unmitigated misery—how much of anger, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness—how much of sin and sorrow, is contained in the words inquisition, slavery, and war! It has been computed, if the seeds of an elm-tree were sown, every seed bringing forth a tree, and the seeds of all the trees again sown in succession, that in the third or fourth generations there would be elms enough to cover the superficies of the earth and the whole planetary system. What an elm-seed is sin! what trees of evil spring from it! and what innumerable scions of iniquity branch out on every hand! He who has not yet reflected on the beginnings and endings of sin, has a suitable subject for his meditations!

What endless griefs on human hearts

Have evil actions hurl'd!

What shadows, plagues, and poison'd darts

Has sin flung on the world!

Hateful are the beginnings of cruelty, whether practised against mankind, or against the unoffending creatures of the lower creation. How subtly they spread their odious influence on the heart of a child, and set his hands to work in doing evil! The fly is caught on the window-pane, and torn to pieces. The painted butterfly is pursued and crushed; the frog and toad are stoned to death; the cat and dog are tormented;

in course of time the fish-hook and the fowling-piece become favourites, and racing and steeple-chasing are added to the catalogue of his cruel pastimes. The love of war follows; and thus he who began by impaling a fly, is able to end by helping to sack a city. Sad are both the beginnings and the endings of cruelty!

It is a universal error to undervalue, if not altogether to overlook, beginnings, when they are small. The stealing of a pin may be the beginning of dishonesty;—we cannot tell from what trifling causes roguery and ruffianism may take their rise; but from whatever source dishonesty may spring, both fact and fiction hold forth the warning moral, that he who will cheat another of a penny will soon be led on to defraud him of a pound. The boy who began his guilty career by stealing a hornbook, ended it by expiring on the gallows. There is not a thief nor a highwayman, whose daring deeds are recorded in the Newgate Calendar, who was not, once, an unconscious, guileless infant in his mother's arms. Men no more become rogues at once, than acorns become oak trees; there is a beginning and a growth in each of them. Jonathan Wild, Jack Shepherd, and Dick Turpin the highwayman, may have been at one period of their lives as free from intentional evil to mankind as Howard the philan-

thropist. Parents, neglect not your lisping children!—no, nor even before they lisp. Instructors of youth, have your eyes on the youngest of your charge. Be quick to discern the beginnings of evil in their hearts, guide them by precept and example, and shield them with your prayers.

The beginnings of contention often lead to frightful endings. Who is there that has not witnessed a quarrel, in which the taunting expression has been followed by the gust of passion. "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with," Prov. xvii. 14. How rapidly one hard word calls forth another! the rushing stream becomes a torrent; the rising blast becomes a whirlwind; angry thoughts are succeeded by bitter words, and bitter words by fearful actions. At the moment I am writing these lines, a heart is beating with shame and remorse within the massy walls of Newgate for a deed of blood. Angry debate ran high, the knife was ready in the grasp of the wretched malefactor; he sprang upon his opponent, and took the precious life. What would he not now give to recall his words and his deeds! But it is too late: no created being can cleanse him of his crimson transgression. A word was the beginning of his wrath, and it led him on

to murder. Ye slaves of hasty temper and sudden passion, pause for a moment, and think on the beginnings and endings of anger!

The good things, as well as the evil things of the world, are oftentimes very small in their beginnings. Who would have supposed that an unseen and unknown benevolent thought, cherished in a human heart, would ever be the means, in heavenly hands, of calling forth myriads of Sunday-school scholars? or that the same agency, under other circumstances, should spread abroad millions and millions of Bibles and religious tracts in the world? Look, ye lovers of mankind, at the beginning and the ending in these cases, and let it strengthen your hands and animate your hearts. The love of mankind is a lovely thing. Oh that it may take root, as a mighty tree, and spread forth its branches to the ends of the earth! He who is in earnest in his desire, to the extent of his ability, to discountenance vice and encourage virtue, to restrain evil and to do good, will do well to cherish the smallest beginnings of humanity and kindness.

But all beginnings are not small, neither are all endings great. How many bright bubbles do we blow, that burst into the empty air! How many painted balloons we send up in the skies, that suddenly descend, and fall into the mire!

How princely we sometimes begin in the purposes of our benevolence, and how pauper-like is the ending of the same undertakings! Our pounds dwindle down to pence, and our warm hearts grow cold. In holy things, too, we begin largely, driving on furiously, like Jehu the son of Nimshi, and, like him, saying as it were to those around us, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord," 2 Kings x. 16. But what does it end in? Alas! alas! we can condemn all sinners but ourselves—we can slay all sins but our own. Jehu smote even to death those who walked unworthily, but he "took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart." He "destroyed Baal out of Israel; howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them," 2 Kings x. 28, 29. How many begin by determining never to forsake the ways of righteousness, and end by denying the Lord of life and glory!

Though I have but touched on my subject, I must leave it to your consideration—it is worthy of your deepest regard. And now comes a question that may well call up the energies of our intellect, and all the resources of our souls. That question is not what will be the end of the high, or of the mighty, or of the earth, or of the heavens;

not what will be the end of others—but what will our end be? To answer this inquiry we must examine our hope. Is the house of our expectation built on a rock, or on the shifting sands of the sea-shore? Have we fled for refuge to the hope set before us of eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord? Have we done the will of our heavenly Father? Do we seek, whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God?

What will be our end? Let us not evade the inquiry, for why should we be enemies to ourselves? In the end, station, and standing, and acquirements, and worldly reputation will avail us nothing; for God is no respecter of persons. In the end, the great will be little in their own eyes, and heroes will be things of small concern. Czars and Cæsars will be bereft of their tiaras, and emperors and kings will be lightly esteemed. The Diveses of all nations will be stripped of their purple, and the lowly Lazaruses clad in goodly raiment. The humble in heart will then be exalted, and the proud in spirit will be brought low. Death is a complete leveller, for he steals from the monarch his crown, from the bishop his mitre, from the soldier his scarlet coat and gilt epaulets, from the scholar his books, and from the miser his money-bags. The judgment

day will make the mighty mean, bring down the haughty look, afflict the cruel, unmask deceit, and make oppression tremble. What then is our hope? and what will be our end? Let us be mindful of the apostle's admonition : " The end of all things is at hand : be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer," 1 Peter iv. 7.



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